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Pancha Bhoota Sthalams:
Five Shiva temples representing
Five elements of Nature



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Dedication

This work is lovingly dedicated at the lotus feet of:

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba



There is only ONE caste -The Caste of Humanity

There is only ONE religion –The Religion of Love

There is only ONE language –The Language of the Heart

There is only ONE God –He is Omnipresent

.....Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

PREFACE

OM NAMAHA SHIVAYA

This *free ebook* is on "Pancha Bhoota Sthalams: Five Shiva temples representing five elements of Nature"

It gives compiled information on following Five Shiva temples, with reference to: location, spiritual importance, poojas and sevas details, festivals, photos, videos, how to reach there etc:

1.Eakambraeswarar Temple, Kanchipuram, Tamilnadu having Prithvi Lingam which is representing Earth

2.Jambukeswarar Temple, Thiruvanaikaval, Tamilnadu having Appu Lingam which is representing Water

3.Sri Kalahasteswara Temple, Sri Kalahasti, Andhrapradesh having Vayu Lingam which is representing Air

4.Arunachaleswarar Temple, Thiruvanamalai, Tamilnadu having Agni Lingam which is representing Fire also known as Annamalaiyar Temple, and

5.Thillai Natarajar Temple, Chidambaram, Tamilnadu having Aagaya Lingam which is representing Space

Details of place, history, temples, legends, religious importance, poojas and sevas etc are given in respect of each kshetra/temple.

In addition, many photos, links to stotras, bhajans and videos etc are also given.

Finally, in Appendix-I, links to many good sites where one can get information on Vedas, Upanishads and other sacred texts, stotras and shlokas on various Gods and Goddesses etc , are given.

Acknowledgements:

Many of my friends and relatives have actively encouraged me in my attempt to compile this free ebook. I sincerely thank them for their support.

My wife Kala has always encouraged and supported me in all my literary works, sacrificing much of her time. This ebook could not have been compiled without her help, support and cooperation. I express my deep appreciation to her.

I have drawn heavily from many references, viz. Wikipedia, Official websites of respective temples, and associated YouTube videos etc.

Finally, I express my immense gratitude to Sri Sathya Sai Baba for His Grace and blessings, prompting me to initiate, continue and complete this work.

M. Thirumaleshwar,

October 12, 2021

Email: tmuliya@rediffmail.com

Similar works by this author:

Link to free ebook: “Guidelines to Teachers ... from Sri SathyaSai Baba’s Teachings”:

http://issuu.com/m.thirumaleshwar/docs/guidelines_to_teachers_...from_sri_/1

Link to free ebook: Human Values and Educare ... from teachings of Sri SathyaSai Baba

https://issuu.com/m.thirumaleshwar/docs/human_values_and_educare...from_tea

Link to free ebook: Purpose of Life and Ways of Sadhana ... from teachings of Sri SathyaSai Baba

http://issuu.com/m.thirumaleshwar/docs/purpose_of_life_and_ways_of_sadhana

Link to free ebook: Sadhana --- Path of Jnana from teachings of Sri SathyaSai Baba

http://issuu.com/m.thirumaleshwar/docs/sadhana_--_path-of-jnana--_from_tea

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https://issuu.com/m.thirumaleshwar/docs/sadhana_--_path_of_bhakti_.....fro

Link to free ebook: Sadhana --- Path of Karma (Action) from life and teachings of Sri SathyaSai Baba

https://issuu.com/m.thirumaleshwar/docs/sadhana_--_path_of_karma_action_../1

Link to free ebook: Glory of Holy Feet of Guru... in Kannada language

http://issuu.com/m.thirumaleshwar/docs/glory_of_holy_feet_of_guru..._in_ka

Link to free ebook: Sadhana --- Path of ‘Namasmarana’ from teachings of Sri SathyaSai Baba

http://issuu.com/m.thirumaleshwar/docs/sadhana_-_path_of_namasmarana--_fr

Link to free ebook: True Guru and His Greatness..... from teachings of Sri SathyaSai Baba

http://issuu.com/m.thirumaleshwar/docs/true_guru_and_his_greatness_----fro

Bhagavan Buddha (Kannada) from teachings of Sri SathyaSai Baba:

<http://free.yudu.com/item/details/3900025/Bhagavan-Budha--Kannada---from-teachings-of-Sri-Sathya-Sai-Baba>

Link to Youtube video: Human Values and Educare ... from teachings of Sri SathyaSai Baba:

<https://youtu.be/fqXmLvaTRkl>

Link to Youtube video: Greatness of Guru... in Kannada language ... from teachings of Sri SathyaSai Baba:

<https://youtu.be/xJFU9eqVMa8>

Link to Youtube video: Sadhana – Path of ‘Namasmarana’ ... from teachings of Sri SathyaSai Baba:

<https://youtu.be/40qQI6EyBOw>

Link to Youtube video: True Guru and His Greatness ... from teachings of Sri SathyaSai Baba

<https://youtu.be/2xqRv1eMI7Q>

Purpose of Life and Ways of Sadhana ... from teachings of Sri SathyaSai Baba:

<https://youtu.be/p6S54VGQqnY>

Link to Youtube video: Sadhana – Path of ‘Jnana’ ... from teachings of Sri SathyaSai Baba:

<https://youtu.be/2ACOVhBbb9M>

Link to Youtube video: Sadhana – Path of ‘Bhakti’ ... from teachings of Sri SathyaSai Baba:

<https://youtu.be/czgl-jU77y0>

Link to Youtube video: Sadhana – Path of ‘Karma’ ... from teachings of Sri SathyaSai Baba:

<https://youtu.be/kAaEpaTxPRo>

Link to Youtube video: Sri SathyaSaiSuprabhatam – sung by P. Susheela, and illustrated with photos:

<https://youtu.be/LnD2jXkRlp8>

Link to Youtube video: Yoga and Dhyana (Kannada) ... from teachings of Sri SathyaSai Baba:

<https://youtu.be/npCFBZRkuil>

Link to: ‘God is eternal witness (Kannada)’: You tube video:

<https://youtu.be/DmzQn9QChx4>

Link to download the free ebook: ‘Shivarathri in Twelve Jyotirlinga

Temples’:<https://app.box.com/s/c7ly665k1fuap3unc6url9ttwxjhid11>

Link to download the ebook: 'Man, Universe and The Supreme':

<https://app.box.com/s/4otzw4ecmt29ludydgttcsgwvpym3ak0>

Link to download the free ebook "Ten famous Sri Rama Temples of India":

<https://app.box.com/s/3yp186g6rmvfwhn9vdon723qcs4fv4z3>

Link to download the free ebook "Twelve famous Sri Durga Temples of India":

<https://app.box.com/s/ua1t6t2d7b1xp2rfw887mm5osh08z3nn>

Link to download "Famous Sri Durga Temples of India-Part-II":

<https://app.box.com/s/rg61b3yb4tek8q10i00izb1ye41wif3g>

Box link to: Puttur Sri Mahalingeshwara temple.

pdf<https://app.box.com/s/m7vned7bt252qydjjv24lgu0gn736nki>

Box link to.... Famous Sri Krishna temples of India-Part- I:

<https://app.box.com/s/dlo36lxtwo1ihct0g2ulubzf2e39f25>

Box link to Famous Sri Krishna temples of India- Part-II

<https://app.box.com/s/7ax0d1uasytyiyvgnr8bxmuxg56ck9xz>

Also, see:

Prashanthi Bhajans:

<http://prasanthi-mandir-bhajan.net/24kbhajan/>

Shlokas, Rudram etc by Pandits on Shivarathri day in Puttaparthi:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/13zrylzXUWIXWIII3eTQBAelYZvX8xrZB/view?usp=sharing>

Links to download of original PDF files:

Glory of Holy Feet of Guru ... in Kannada language:

<https://app.box.com/s/mbcw1zsy1o5s1l5gk9exi3jkuceka8n7>

Swami's teachings to Teachers, Human values & Educare:

<https://app.box.com/s/cee1y3ptuvwxw0sb2t4qtq3swcens6r>

Swami's teachings... Purpose of life, Sadhana – Path of Jnana, Bhakti, Karma:

<https://app.box.com/s/kovqfemjyjkqn42e7hu2xmwqzkiga08>

Sri Sathya Sai Baba on Five elements:

Godhead expresses itself initially as the five elements: sky, wind, fire, water and earth. All creation is but a combination of two or more of these in varying proportions. The characteristic nature of these five elements are sound, touch, form, taste and smell; cognised by ear, skin, eye, tongue and nose. Now, since these are saturated with the Divine, one must use them reverentially and with humility and gratefulness. Use them intelligently to promote the welfare of yourself and others; use them with moderation and with the idea of loving service to all. They are all free and full of precious potentiality. Appreciate the plenty and the preciousness. You know from experience that excessive quantities of wind, fire or water are injurious to health. So, efficient use of these is itself a form of worship. Nature is in essence Divinity itself, Ishavasyam idam sarvam: all this is divine. Vasudevassarvamidam: all this is Vasudeva, God. So, tread softly, move reverentially, and utilise gratefully....(Divine Discourse Oct 15, 1966).

Ref:

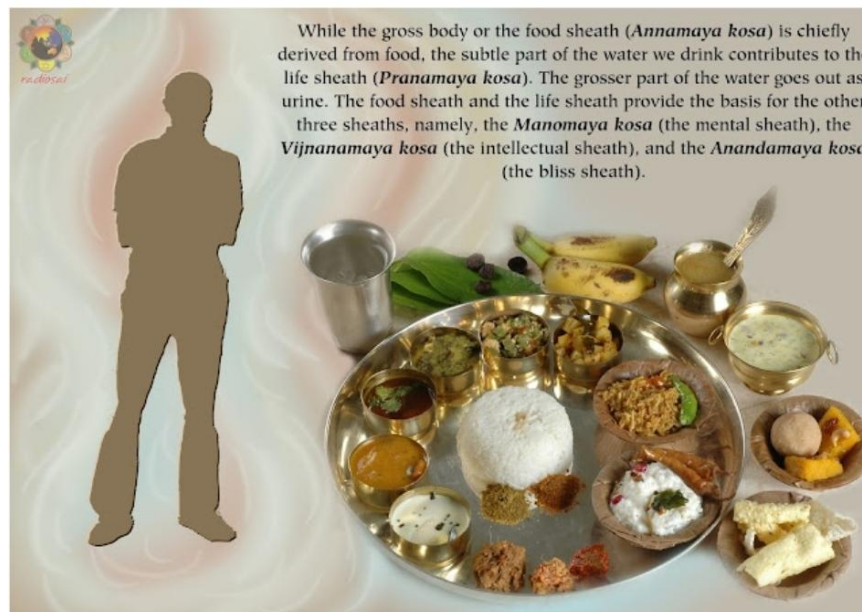
<https://sathyasaiwithstudents.blogspot.com/2020/08/what-are-pancha-kosha-and-pancha-bhutas.html#.YWG5zIVX7kw>

What are the Pancha Kosha and Pancha Bhutas?



Pancha Koshas: Five Sheaths

Here is a small example. Our body is made up of the five sheaths. The first is Annamaya Kosha (organic sheath), the second Pranamaya Kosha (life sheath), the third the Manomaya Kosha (mental sheath) the fourth Vijnanamaya Kosha (knowledge sheath) and the fifth Anandamaya Kosha (bliss sheath). This composition of the five sheaths is common to all human beings in all parts of the globe. You cannot argue that only Indians are created this way and not other nationals! What exactly is Annamaya Kosha? This body is formed out of food (organic material), lives on food and deteriorates with food. It undergoes the six stages of growth through food. Thus, the body by itself is Annamaya sheath. Next is Pranamaya sheath, which consists of five organs of action and the five life breaths. Manomaya Kosha is but the nature of mind, projected in the five organs of action, the five senses of perception and the thought process. The intelligence behind sound, touch, sight, taste and smell is Vijnanamaya Kosha. Finally we have the Anandamaya sheath. There are three levels of Ananda. They are Priyam, Modam and Pramodam. Priyam is the pleasantness on thinking or hearing about something we like. Modam is the happiness that is felt when we acquire or come in contact with the things we like. Pramodam is the ecstasy, the real happiness that we experience when we actually enjoy the object of our liking. Say, something reminds you of a fruit that you like. You experience some amount of joy. The cause of such joy is the affection you have on that particular thing or person. This is what we call Priyam. When you spot the fruit in the market during your visit, you feel greater joy (Modam). Finally when you relish the fruit, it gives the greatest joy (Pramodam). Similarly, the thrill you experience by knowing God's powers - the manifestation of His Divinity and His Divine love from scriptures and epics is called Priyam. When you put it into practice what you heard, you derive the happiness of Modam. The ecstasy you experience when you are in union with God is the everlasting state of joy and bliss; that is Pramodam. Thus, listening about God, putting it into practice and feeling and experiencing what was practiced - these are the levels of Priyam, Modam and Pramodam. So the fifth one is the Anandamaya sheath.



Why are these called Kosha or sheath? A scabbard is a sheath for sword. Rice is sheathed in husk. A tamarind seed is sheathed by tamarind pulp, which in turn is sheathed by the outer shell of the fruit. Similarly, foetus is sheathed within the womb of the mother. Thus, when one thing covers another and hides the identity of the latter, it is called a sheath. So Annamaya Kosha is a sheath that covers up the Pranamaya Kosha. Inside the Pranamaya Kosha is Manomaya Kosha. Manomaya Kosha further hides the Vijnanamaya Kosha within it. Vijnanamaya itself is a sheath that has Anandamaya as its kernel. Within this Anandamaya Kosha resides the Atma- the soul. Thus, so many sheaths cover the Atma and this structure applies to all humans of all countries. There is no exception. So, all beings have equal right and opportunity to seek the soul within them. But then, one has to feel an urge to do so. This urge to attain and experience Atmic status is born within all, automatically.

Pancha Bhutas in the Human Body



There are also the five elements. Akasha (the space), Vayu (the air), Agni (the fire), Jal (the water) and Bhumi, (the earth). We must identify as to how the components or limbs of a human being originate from each of the elements. All the five elements are in the human form. From the element of space are born emotions, prejudices, apprehensions, shyness and the like which are found in man. The element of air causes within the body, the reflexes and movements like walking, shaking, shivering, respiration and so on. What does fire give rise to? Hunger, thirst, sleep and fear- all these are aspects of fire. What about water? Mucus, urine, blood and the like are emanated from the elements of water. Finally, the element of earth - skin, muscles, veins, bones, nails and hair are all manifestations of earth. Thus in every human being, the aspects of space, air, fire, water and earth are in symbiosis. When you see from this point of view, who can authoritatively argue, 'this is mine, and that is yours', 'I am greater and you are lesser' and so on. If someone talks such a language he can safely be branded as dull-headed, for they are the ones who are unable to see the reality. If only they have a deeper understanding, they will certainly be able to comprehend this truth. We should not be bogged down by the prevailing times and circumstances. That amounts to leading a narrow life. We should develop the expanding way of life. We should tread the path that is holy, eternal and ever new.

Source: The Universal Religion, Discourse 16, *My Dear Students Volume 2*; Divine Discourse delivered on July 23, 1989 at Prasanthi Nilayam

Excerpts from Divine Discourse delivered on 20th October, 2002:

<https://youtu.be/CxD53uG4gFs>

Divine Discourse, 14th April, 2002: <https://youtu.be/PdPUOSytOrY>

Excerpts from Divine Discourse delivered on 12th October, 2002:

<https://youtu.be/LgVci4ivl-c>

Excerpts from Divine Discourse delivered on Gurupoornima, 1988

<https://youtu.be/RnBFGhEhXHk>

Panchabhoota Sthalams- Five Shiva temples representing five elements of Nature

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Ref: walkthroughindia.com

5 Pancha Bhootam Temples of Lord Shiva in South India:

Pancha Bhoota temples are set of five temples of Lord Shiva, represents the manifestation of the five prime elements of nature Earth, Water, Fire, Air and Sky. All these famous Shiva temples are located in South Indian states of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh.

Ekambareswarar Temple (Earth) in Tamil Nadu



Ekambareswarar Temple of Kanchipuram is the most famous Shiva temple in Tamil Nadu and one of the Panch Bootha Sthalangal of God Shiva. Lord Shiva is worshiped as Ekambareswarar in the form of Prithivi Lingam, located in the town of Kanchipuram in Tamil Nadu.

Jambukeshwarar Temple (Water) in Tamil Nadu



Jambukeswarar Temple is one of the five major Shiva Temples of Tamil Nadu, situated in Tiruchirapalli or Trichy of Tamil Nadu. The temple represents the element of water and sanctum has an underground water stream.

Annamalaiyar Temple (Fire) in Tamil Nadu



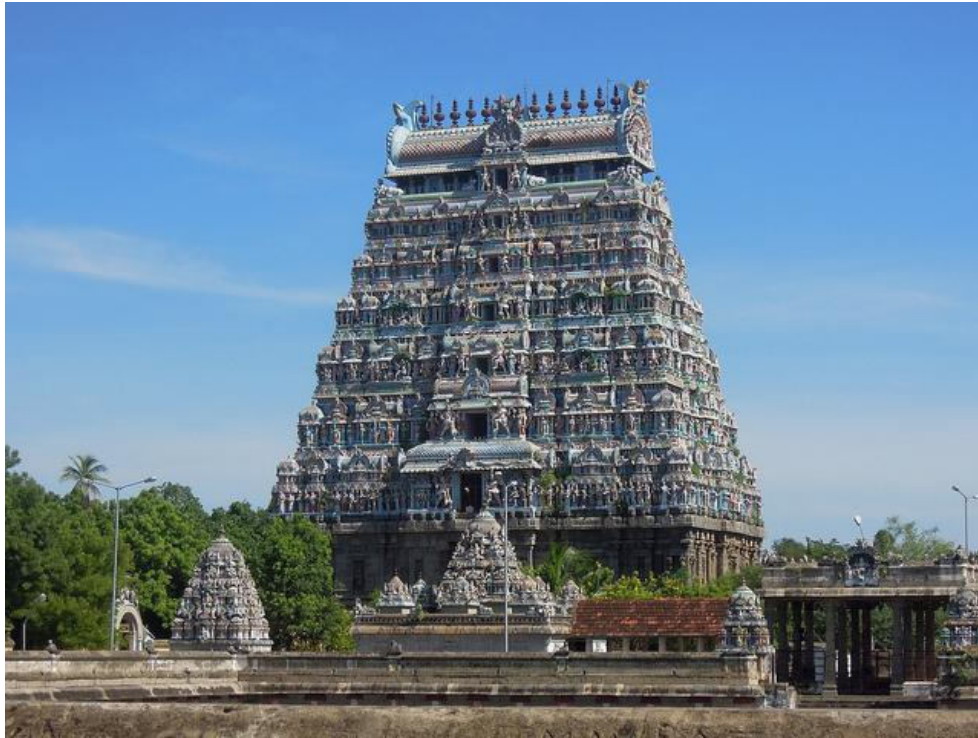
Arunachaleswara Temple or Annamalaiyar Temple of Lord Shiva is associated with Agni or Jyothi Lingam and the temple complex is one of the largest in India.

Srialahasteeswara Temple (Air) in Andhra Pradesh



Srikalahasteeswara Temple is one of the top five most famous Shiva temples in South India, located in the town of Srikalahasti in Andhra Pradesh. Srikalahasti temple representing wind and the only Pancha Bhootam Stalam located out of Tamil Nadu.

Thillai Nataraja Temple (Sky) in Tamil Nadu



Thillai Nataraja Temple is located in the town of Chidambaram and Lord Shiva worshipped as the Lord of Dance. The Chidambaram temple is representing the Aagaya Lingam and has one of the tallest Gopuram in India.

Ref: artofliving.org

All You Needed to Know and More about Lord Shiva's Five Primary Manifestations on Earth

Lord Shiva is worshipped for many reasons all over India. However, in South India, He is worshipped as the presiding deity of the five elements of Nature, and is called Bhootapati or Bhootnath.

Na | Ma | Shi | Va | Ya – these five syllables indicate the five elements (known as Bhoota in Sanskrit) – Earth, Water, Fire, Air, and Ether. The five elements are the building blocks of everything in Creation, including the human body, and Lord Shiva is the upholder of the five elements.

There is an ancient saying in India – Without the permission of Lord Shiva, even a blade of grass couldn't sway to the wind. Honouring this aspect of Lord Shiva (as the upholder of the five elements) are the Pancha Bhoota Sthalams – the five Shiva temples, each of which represent one of the five elements of Nature. All of these temples are located in the Southern part of India and each temple has a unique story to tell with a distinct spiritual essence.

Here is a small attempt to take you on an imaginary tour of the five temples, till you get the opportunity to visit them life size.

Ekambareshwarar temple



Earth Element | Kanchipuram, Tamil Nadu

In the Ekambareshwarar temple, Lord Shiva is represented by a Lingam made out of sand to depict the Earth element. This is also known as Prithvi Lingam. Here, Lord Shiva is fondly worshipped as Ekambaranathar and Ekambareshwar. Ekambareshwarar means Lord of the Mango Tree and there is a legend regarding the origin of the temple.

Once upon a time, Goddess Parvathi was in deep penance under a mango tree. In order to test her devotion, Lord Shiva sent the river Ganga to disrupt her penance and test her

devotion. Goddess Parvathi then prayed to Ganga not to harm her as they were sisters. Ganga then did not disturb her penance. Goddess Parvathi made a Shiva Lingam from the sand near the Mango Tree in remembrance of the Lord, and consecrated it. Even today, to prevent the sand-made Shiva Lingam from deteriorating, the Abhishekam is done with jasmine oil (as it is a low-density fluid).

Essence of the Story

One does not need special idols or sculptures to enshrine God, but just a fistful of sand with all of one's devotion.

5 Facts about the Ekambareshwarar Temple

1. The temple is the tenth largest temple in India, spread over 23 acres.
2. It has one of the tallest Gopurams (monumental ornate gateway tower) in South India, at 190 feet.
3. Having been in existence since at least 600 AD, the Ekambareshwarar temple is one of the most ancient temples in India.
4. There is a mango tree inside the temple that is said to be more than 3000 years old.
5. Many kings have contributed to the architecture of the temple.

Jambukehwarar temple



Water Element | Thiruvanaikaval, Trichy, Tamil Nadu

The Jambukeshwarar Temple in Trichy depicts the water element. Here, Lord Shiva is worshipped in the form of Appu Lingam (a water Lingam). In the shrine of the temple, a stream of water flows under the Lingam. This engulfs the Lingam with water, embodying the water element.

As the story goes, Goddess Parvathi as Akhilandeswari found the Jambu forest to perform her penance. Here, she made a Lingam out of water and worshipped it, which is known as the Appu Lingam. Legend goes that it was then that Lord Shiva appeared to her and taught her the Shiva Gnana (the ultimate knowledge by Lord Shiva).

As Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvathi share a Guru and disciple relationship here, the Shivaratri celebrations of Girija Kalyanam (wedding of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvathi), which is otherwise conducted in Shiva temples is not performed in this temple, and the idols in the temple are installed opposite each other.

It is believed that the Mother Divine (Goddess Parvathi) worshipped Lord Shiva in this temple, and so even today the priests of the temple dress up like a woman and offer prayers to the Lord as a symbolic depiction of Goddess Akhilandeswari's worship. This daily ritual is attended by many pilgrims every day.

Essence of the Story

Lord Shiva is worshipped as the highest teacher in the ancient Indian tradition. Water symbolises wisdom and the flow of water represents learning. The Jambukeshwarar temple therefore symbolises the significance of wisdom and learning in the most beautiful way.

It is said that those who offer worship at this temple will be bestowed with wisdom and intelligence.

5 Facts about the Jambukeshwarar Temple

1. The temple is around 1800 years old and was built by Kocenganna Chola.
2. It is the thirteenth largest temple in India, spread over 18 acres.
3. There are inscriptions on the walls of the temple from the Chola period.
4. The Uchi Kala Pooja, which is conducted every afternoon, is very famous; in this pooja, the priests dress up in a saree, representing Goddess Parvathi, and perform Abhishekam on the Appu Lingam.
5. It is said that the stream of water below the Appu Lingam never dries up.

Arunachaleswarar temple

The Arunachaleswarar Temple depicts the Fire element bestowed by Shiva and is represented by the Agni Lingam. The Arunachaleswarar Temple is one of the most visited and revered pilgrim centres in India.

As the story goes, once upon a time, Goddess Parvathi playfully closed the eyes of Shiva. This led to a blackout in the universe for thousands of years. Upon penance by His devotees, Shiva appeared as a column of fire on the Annamalai hill in Thiruvannamalai.

There is another story that explains the Fire element of Shiva – When Lord Vishnu and Lord Brahma contested for superiority, Shiva appeared as a flame and challenged Them to find His source. Brahma took the form of a swan and flew up towards the sky to see the top of the flame, while Vishnu became a boar and went downwards. This scene in Hindu Mythology is called lingothbava. Brahma and Vishnu failed to find the source. While Vishnu conceded His defeat, Brahma lied that He had found the pinnacle. In punishment, Shiva ordained that Brahma would never have temples on Earth in his worship.

Essence of the Story

Fire represents purity, Fire represents light, and Fire represents energy. And worshiping, chanting, and remembering the Divine brings purity into our lives, our minds, and our hearts.

The Arunachaleswarar deity is said to bless seekers with the light of knowledge, a cleansing of karmic impressions, and positive energy.



Fire Element | Annamalai Hills, Thiruvannamalai, Tamil Nadu

5 Facts about the Arunachaleswarar Temple

1. The largest temple in the world dedicated to the worship of Lord Shiva.

2. The temple is said to be the eighth largest temple in India; it uses all its 24 acres area completely for religious purposes.
3. The history of this temple dates back thousands of years and it has even been mentioned in sacred Tamil scriptures.
4. Every full moon, thousands of pilgrims perform the Girivalam, which is a form of worship done by the circumambulation of the Arunachala hill. This is a 14-km long walk. The legend is that this walk washes away sins, fulfils desires, and gives one freedom from the cycle of birth and death.
5. The temple has four Gopurams, one on each side. The highest of these is called Rajagopuram, which is 217 feet in height and is the third largest in India.

Kalahastheeshwara temple



Air Element | Srikalahasti, Andra Pradesh

Located on the banks of the Swarnamukhi River, the Kalahastheeshwara Temple depicts the Air element. Lord Shiva is worshipped at this temple in the form of Vayu Lingam, representing the wind.

Srikalahasti is known as the Kailash of the South. Srikalahasti gets its name from Sri – a spider, Kala – a snake, and Hasti – an elephant. These creatures had pleased Shiva with their selfless devotion.

There is a lamp inside the inner sanctum that is constantly flickering despite the presence of air inside. The Vayu Lingam can be observed to move even when the priests close off the entrance to the main deity room, which does not have any windows. The Lingam is white and is considered Swayambhu, or self-manifested.

Lord Shiva is said to have manifested as a Vayu Lingam when Vayu Deva—the God of Wind—prayed for a boon to be present in all living creatures across the Universe, like the Almighty himself. Lord Shiva then manifested himself as a white Lingam, which is also called Karpooora Linga. Even today, the lingam is white in colour, adding credence to the tale.

Essence of the Story

Air represents life. Without air, there is no life on this Universe. Just as we worship the Air element, we worship the Shiva Tattva present in each and every living being on this Creation.

5 Facts about the Kalahastheeshwara Temple

1. The initial structure of the temple was constructed in the 5th century. The active construction of the Srikalahasti continued for centuries after that.
2. The main Gopuram is 120 feet high and was built in 1516 AD by the Vijaynagar King Krishnadevaraya. It is considered to be an architectural marvel.
3. The Gopuram collapsed in May 2010 and is currently under renovation.
4. The temple is famous for their Rahu-Kethu poojas. It is believed that the ill-effects manifesting due to the positioning and movements of the planets Rahu and Kethu can be warded off when this particular Pooja is performed with utmost devotion.
5. It is said that the priests never touch the Vayu Lingam of the Kalahastheeshwara temple with their hands.

The Thillai Nataraja Temple

The Thillai Nataraja Temple in Chidambaram worships the Ether (Sky) element, the subtlest of the five elements. Lord Shiva is worshipped in His formless form in the Thillai Nataraja Temple.



Ether Element | Chidambaram, Tamil Nadu

The town of Chidambaram has a fascinating story that reveals a lot of rich information about Shiva. Lord Shiva was once strolling in the mangrove forests (Thillai Vanam) located at Chidambaram. The forest housed sages who believed in magic and that God can be controlled by rituals and mantras. The sages and their wives were enchanted by the beauty of Lord Shiva. On seeing their womenfolk enchanted, the rishis got enraged and invoked scores of serpents. Lord Shiva lifted the serpents and donned them as ornaments on his matted locks, neck, and waist.

Further enraged, the sages invoked a fierce tiger, whose skin was used by Lord Shiva as a shawl around His waist. Then followed a fierce elephant, which was devoured and ripped to death by Lord Shiva. The Rishis finally invoked Muyalakan, who symbolizes the arrogance and ignorance in all of us. Lord Shiva crushed the demon under His feet and performed the Ananda Tandava (the dance of Eternal Bliss) and disclosed His real form. The idol of Nataraja in Chidambaram depicts the deity performing the Ananda Tandava.

Apart from Nataraja, the Chidambara Rahasya, or the greatest secret, is said to have originated from this temple. The Chidambara Rahasya depicts the priest unveiling the curtain to an empty space within the inner sanctum of the temple. This symbolises the removal of the curtain of ignorance to attain the Ultimate Bliss. The Chidambara Rahasya is hence a representative of that time when one, in total surrender, allows God to intervene and remove our ignorance, even as we get to see and experience His presence and hence experience Deep Bliss.

Essence of the story

The goal of spiritual practices is to attain Bliss. The motive of the path is to make you hollow and empty. Thillai Nataraja symbolizes the path spiritual seekers need to take to attain the ultimate divinity.

Thillai Nataraja therefore symbolizes that the ultimate motive of a seeker is to achieve emptiness.

5 Facts about the Thillai Nataraja Temple

1. The temple is the fifth largest temple in India, expanding over a space of 40 acres, located in the heart of the town of Chidambaram.
2. The word “Chidambaram” is derived from the word “Chit”, which means consciousness, and “Ambaram”, which means the sky. It refers to the “Sky of Consciousness”, which is the ultimate aim of human life.
3. It is the only temple out of the Panch Bhoota Sthalam where Lord Shiva is represented by an anthropomorphic idol rather than the Lingam. The temple also worships Lord Shiva in the form of a Lingam made out of crystal and in his formless form (represented by an empty room).
4. The Gopuram of the temple carries a gold-plated roof by the Chola King Parantaka.
5. Legend has it that the temple is located at the lotus heart of the universe – Virat hridaya padma sthalam.

With this introduction, now let us study some details about each of these temples briefly, with reference to temple history, legends, architecture, spiritual importance, poojas and sevas, timings, festivals, how to reach there ...etc:

Panchabhoota Sthalams- Five Shiva temples representing five elements of Nature

1. Ekambareswarar temple, Kanchipuram

Compiled by: M. Thirumaleshwar
Email: tmuliya@rediffmail.com



Ref: wikipedia

Ekambareswarar Temple (Ekambaranathar Temple) is a Hindu temple dedicated to the deity Shiva, located in the town of Kanchipuram in Tamil Nadu, India.[1] It is significant to the Hindu sect of Saivism as one of the temples associated with the five elements, the Pancha Bhoota Stalas, and specifically the element of earth, or Prithvi. Shiva is worshiped as Ekambareswarar or Ekambaranathar, and is represented by the lingam, with his idol referred to as Prithvi lingam. His consort Parvati is depicted as Elavarkuzhali. The presiding deity is revered in the 7th century Tamil Saiva canonical work, the Tevaram, written by Tamil saint poets known as the nayanars and classified as Paadal Petra Sthalam. The temple also houses Nilathingal Thundam Perumal temple, a Divyadesam, the 108 temples revered in the Vaishnava canon Nalayira Divya Prabhandam.[2]

The temple complex covers 25 acres, and is one of the largest in India. It houses four gateway towers known as gopurams. The tallest is the southern tower, with 11 stories and a

height of 58.5216 metres (192 ft), making it one of the tallest temple towers in India. The temple has numerous shrines, with those of Ekambareswarar and Nilathingal Thundam Perumal being the most prominent. The temple complex houses many halls; the most notable is the thousand-pillared hall built during the Vijayanagar period.

The temple has six daily rituals at various times from 5:30 a.m. to 10 p.m., and twelve yearly festivals on its calendar. Panguni Uthiram festival celebrated for thirteen days during the Tamil month of Panguni (March - April) is the most prominent festival of the temple and the town.[3]

The present masonry structure was built during the Chola dynasty in the 9th century, while later expansions are attributed to Vijayanagar rulers. The temple is maintained and administered by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Department of the Government of Tamil Nadu. The temple is the largest and one of the most prominent tourist attractions in the city.[4]

Legend



Stucco image of the legend of Mango tree



Mango tree behind the sanctum

Legend has it that once Parvati, the consort of Shiva, wanted to expiate herself from sin by doing penance under the temple's ancient Mango tree near Vegavathi river.[5][6] In order to test her devotion Shiva sent fire on her. Goddess Parvati prayed to her brother, Vishnu, for help. In order to save her, he took the Moon from Shiva's head and showed the rays which then cooled down the tree as well as Parvati. Shiva again sent the river Ganga (Ganges) to disrupt Parvati's penance. Parvati Request to Ganga and convinced her that both of them were sisters and so should not harm her. Subsequently, Ganga did not disturb her penance and Parvati made a Shiva Linga out of sand to get united with Shiva. The God here came to be known as Ekambareswarar or "Lord of Mango Tree".[7]

According to another legend, it is believed that Parvati worshipped Shiva in the form of a Prithivi Lingam (or a Lingam improvised out of sand), under a mango tree.[1] Legend has it that the neighboring Vegavathi river overflowed and threatened to engulf the Shiva Lingam and that Parvati or Kamakshi embraced the Lingam. Shiva touched by the gesture materialized in person and married her. In this context he is referred to as Tazhuva kuzhainthaar ("He who melted in Her embrace") in Tamil.

Tirukuripputhonda Nayanar, one of the 63 saivite saints, called nayanars was a washerman near the temple and he washed the clothes of all the Saivites. He was divinely tricked by God Shiva appearing as an aged brahmin and asked him to wash before dawn. At the same time Shiva made a cloudy evening. On observing the approach of the evening, the washerman banged his head in a stone in disappointment. God appeared in his true form and graced his devotee.[6]

History

This vast temple is one of the most ancient in India having been in existence since at least 600 CE. Second-century-CE Tamil poetry speaks of Kama kottam, and the Kumara kottam (currently the Kamakshi Amman temple and the Subramanya temple). The temple finds mention in the classical Tamil Sangam literature dated 300 BCE like Manimegalai and Perumpāṇāruppaṭai.[8] Initially temple was built by Pallavas. The Vedantist Kachiyapper served as a priest at the temple. The existing structure then, was pulled down and rebuilt by the later Chola Kings. Adi Sankara, the 10th-century saint got Kanchipuram remodelled along with expansion of this temple along with Kamakshi Amman temple and Varadaraja Perumal Temple with the help of local rulers.[9]



Shrines inside the temple



Sculptures on the walls of the temple

There are inscriptions dated 1532 CE (record 544 of 1919) indicating the gift of number of villages made by Achutaraya.[10] Vira Narasingaraya Saluva Nayaka who was directed by Achutaraya broke the royal order by giving more lands to Ekambaranathar temple than the Varadaraja Swamy temple against the instruction of an equal gift to either of the temples. Achutaraya on hearing this equally distributed the lands to both the temples.[10]

The Vijayanagar kings, during the 15th century, also made lot of contributions to the temple[11] and later developed by Vallal Pachiyappa Mudaliar used to go regularly from Chennai to Kanchipuram to worship in this temple, he spent significant money he amazed during British rule on the temple renovation, Pachiyappa Mudaliar seated at horse back can

be seen in the temple pillar. At the later stage a similar temple with same name Ekambareswarar was constructed in Chennai by Pachiappa Mudaliar in order to avoid travelling time to Kanchipuram. The Archaeological Survey of India report of 1905–06 indicates widespread renovation activities carried out in the temple by Nattukottai Chettiars.[12]

Architecture



Shrines inside the temple

The temple covers an area of over 23 acres (93,000 m²).[2] Reaching a height of 59 m (194 ft), the temple's Raja gopuram (the entrance tower to the temple) is one of the tallest in South India.[11] The bottom half of the gateway tower has the shrines of Vinayaka and Murugan on either sides. From the entrance, there are two halls namely Vahana Mandapam (vehicle hall) and Sarabesa Mandapam (also called Navaratri hall).[13] The Aayiram Kaal Mandapam, or the "hallway with a thousand pillars", which was built by the Vijayanagar Kings, is found on precinct after the gateway tower.[11] There is said to have been an underground holy river. The fourth courtyard contains a small Ganesha temple and a pond. The third courtyard contains lot of smaller shrines. The flag staff of the temple is axial to the sanctum and diagonally located to the main entrance and the temple tank on either directions. There is a shrine called Thirukachi Mayanam and Kalayana Mandapa, named after Pachayappa Mudaliar, both of which are located close to the flag staff. Thirukachi Mayanam, Valeesam, Rishabesam and Satyanadeesam are located in four corners of the temple. The hall of the flagstaff has pillars sculpted with intricate figures indicating various legends and avatars of Shiva.[13]

The sanctum sanctorum contains the lingam along with the image of Shiva.[14] There are granite image of the 63 Nayanmars around the first precinct.[15] The temple's inner most precinct are decorated with an array of Shivalingam, one of which is a Sahasra Lingam with

1,008 Siva lingams sculpted on it.[16] There is no separate shrine for Parvati within the complex as with all other Shiva temples in Kanchipuram. A local belief is that Kamakshi Amman Temple is the consort for Ekambaranathar. Behind the image of Lingam in the sanctum, there is a depiction of Shiva Parvathi in a plaque with Shiva depicted as Tazhuva kuzhainthaar and Parvathi as Elavar Kuzhali.[8]

There is a small shrine for Vishnu named Nilathingal Thundam Perumal temple inside the temple complex. Vishnu is prayed as Vamana Murthy and the shrine is hailed by the Alvar saints as one of the 108 Divya Desams.

There is a separate shrine for Nataraja on the second precinct.[13]

The sthala-viruttham or temple tree is believed to be a 3,500-year-old mango tree whose branches are said to yield four different types of mangoes from its four branches.[1][7][11][16]

Religious significance of the temple



The entrance shrine of the temple

Pancha Bhoota Stalam refers to the five Shiva temples,[17] each representing the manifestation of the five prime elements of nature - land, water, air, sky, fire.[18] Pancha indicates five, Bhoota means elements and Stala means place. All these temples are located in South India with four of these temples at Tamil Nadu and one at Andhra Pradesh. The five elements are believed to be enshrined in the five lingams[17] and each of the lingams representing Shiva in the temple have five different names based on the elements they

represent. In the temple, Shiva is said to have manifested himself in the form of Prithvi Lingam. The other four manifestations are Appu Lingam (representing water) at Jambukeswarar Temple, Thiruvanaikaval,[19] Akaya Lingam (representing sky)[17] at Thillai Nataraja Temple, Chidambaram,[19] Agni Lingam (representing fire)[20] at Annamalaiyar Temple[19] and Vayu Lingam (representing air) at Srikalahasti Temple.[19][21]

Saints and literary mention

Tirugnana Sambandar, a 7th-century Tamil Saivite poet, venerated Ekambareswarar in ten verses in Tevaram, compiled as the First Tirumurai. Appar and Sundarar, contemporaries of Sambandar, also venerated Ekambareswarar in 10 verses in Tevaram, compiled as the Fifth Tirumurai and Ninth Tirumurai respectively. As the temple is revered in Tevaram, it is classified as Paadal Petra Sthalam, one of the 276 temples that find mention in the Saiva canon. Manickavasagar, a 9th-century Tamil saint and poet, revered Ekambareswarar in his writing. Thus the temple is revered by all four Saiva Kuravars. The presiding deity is also revered in the verses of famous folk singer Kanchi Kotayappa Nayak, one of the trinities of Carnatic music Muthuswami Dikshitar and Pattinathar.[13]

Worship and festivals



Image of Nataraja during a festival



Temple mount used during a festival

The temple priest perform the pooja (rituals) during festivals and on a daily basis. Like other Shiva temples of Tamil Nadu, the priests belong to the Shaivaite community, a Brahmin sub-caste. The temple rituals are performed six times a day; Ushathkalam at 5:30 a.m., Kalasanthi at 8:00 a.m., Ucchikalam at 10:00 a.m., Sayarakshai at 6:00 p.m., Irandamkalam at 8:00 p.m. and Ardha Jamam at 10:00 p.m. Each ritual comprises four steps: abhishekam (sacred bath), alankaram (decoration), naivedyam (food offering) and deepa aradhanai (waving of lamps) for the pedestal of Ekambareswarar. Since it is a Lingam made of sand mound, all the ablution is done only to the pedestal. The worship is held amidst music with nagaswaram (pipe instrument) and tavil (percussion instrument), religious instructions in the Vedas read by priests and prostration by worshippers in front of the temple mast. There are weekly rituals like somavaram and shukravaram, fortnightly rituals like pradosham and monthly festivals like amavasai (new moon day), kiruthigai or on krittika nakshatram, pournami (full moon day) and chaturthi.[13][22]

The temple celebrates dozens of festivals throughout the year. The most important of these is the Panguni (or Phalguni in devanagari) Brahmotsavam that lasts ten days during the Tamil month of Panguni, between March and April, concluding with the celebration of Kalyanotsavam. The festival is the most popular of all the temple festivals in Kanchipuram.[23] There are various processions during the ten days with the festive images

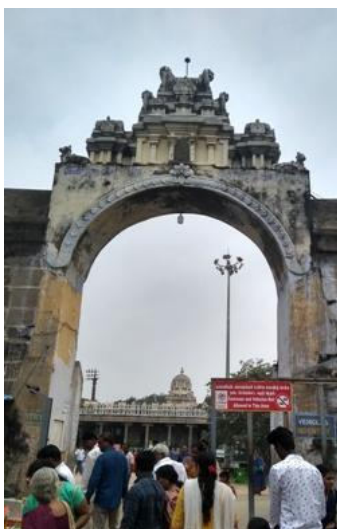
of presiding deities of the temple carried in various mounts around the streets of the temple. During the fifth day, Ekambareswarar is carried silver mount Nandi during the morning and Ravanaeswara Vahanam during the evening. The 63 Nayanmars are taken in procession the sixth day morning, while Ekambareswarar is carried on Silver car festival in the evening. Silver Mavadi seva is performed on the ninth day. On the concluding day, Kalyanotsavam (marriage festival) is held when the marriage of Ekambareswarar is enacted. During the day, many unmarried people get married irrespective of their caste along with the deity. The event is witnessed by thousands of people every year.[13]

Administration

The temple is maintained and administered by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Department of the Government of Tamil Nadu.[24]

Gallery:









Ref: myoksha.com

Ekambareswarar Temple Kanchipuram



Ekambareswarar Temple

The Ekambareswarar Temple in the town of Kanchipuram in Tamil Nadu is one of the Pancha Bhoota Stalas. It is dedicated to the element of earth, or Prithvi. Lord Shiva is Ekambareswarar or Ekambaranathar here represented by Prithvi lingam. Moreover, Devi Parvati is depicted as Gowridevi Amman.

The other four temples in this category are Thiruvanaikaval Jambukeswara (water), Chidambaram Natarajar (ether), Thiruvannamalai Arunachaleswara (fire) and Kalahasti Nathar (wind). Further, all of the four famous Shaivite Saints have sung the glories of this temple. Srikalahasti temple is famous for its Rahu Ketu Dosha Remedy.

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What is the history of Ekambareswarar Temple?

History of Ekambeswarar temple says that Pallava Kings built a part of the temple. However, the rest of it was built in the 17th century. This temple is one of the most ancient in India. Also, Second century AD Tamil poetry speaks of Kama kottam, and the Kumara kottam.

Initially, Pallavas built the temple. The Vedantist Kachiyapper served as a priest at the temple. Then, the Chola Kings rebuilt the entire structure. Also, Adi Sankara, the 10th-century saint remodelled Kanchipuram along with expansion of this temple.

The Vijayanagar kings also made a lot of contributions to the temple. Vallal Pachiyappa Mudaliar used to go regularly from Chennai to Kanchipuram to worship in this temple. He also spent a lot of money on the temple's renovation. The temple pillar contains an image of Pachiyappa Mudaliar seated at horseback.

According to the devotees, there is a legend around the temple. Some say that once while Lord Shiva was meditating Parvati mischievously covered his eyes with her fingers. It resulted in complete darkness on earth for many years. As a result, Parvati went to earth and created the earth linga and worshiped it under a mango tree in Kanchipuram giving birth to the temple.

What is the significance of Ekambareswarar Temple?

The significance of the Ekambeswarar Temple is that it is the 1st of the 32 Tevara Stalam built in the Tondai region. It is the largest Shiva temple in Kanchipuram. A Somaskanda panel featuring Shiva, Parvati and Skanda together adorn the back end of the main shrine.

In 1509, Krishna Deva Raja of the Vijayanagara kingdom built a 60 meter high Gopuram.

The temple premise also has a 540 pillar hall, beautifully designed and carved. The Vijayanagara Monarch constructed the pillared hall.

A 3500 years old mango tree adores the sanctum having four branches each dedicated to the four Vedas. Moreover, the Deity derives its name from the Mango tree from the words Eka-Amra-Natha, meaning the Lord of the Mango tree. The path to the tree also has a Shiva Lingam made of around 1008 small lingas.

What are the timings of Ekambareswarar Temple?

The timings of Ekambeswarar temple are:

TIMINGS	FROM	TO
Morning	6 AM	11 AM
Evening	5 PM	8 PM
Ushakkala Pooja	6 AM	
Saayaraksha Pooja	6 PM	
Arthajama Pooja	8PM	

Which festivals are celebrated at Ekambareswarar Temple?

Some of the festivals celebrated at Ekambeswarar temple are:

- The month of July observes the important festival Ani Tirumanjanam .
- Also, the month of August observes Adi Kritikai and Avani Moolam .
- The Chitra Purnima and Vaisakhi In the months of May and June marks the temples annual calender. The Panguni is a festival of 13 days. During this period, the wedding of the presiding deity takes place.

How to reach Ekambareswarar Temple?

Air: Chennai is the nearest airport which is 75km away from Kanchipuram. Public and private transport facilities are available.

Rail: Connected on the southern part of railways Kanchipuram has few trains running through the town.

Road: The city is only a few kms away from the Quadrilateral National Highway.

Where to stay near Ekambareswarar Temple?

Some places to stay near Ekambeswarar temple are:

Sri Hari Residency at 99, West Raja Street, Near Sri Kumara Kottam Temple offers grand cosy accomodations. It is an excellent place to stay.

Also, M.Hotel, Kanchipuram of No. 65-66, Nellukara Street, Bus Stand is another great place to check in. It has well suited amenities and a blissful environment.

What are some temples near Ekambareswarar Temple?

Some of the temples near Ekambareswarar temple are:

Kailasnatha Temple- This temple worships Lord Shiva, the supreme Hindu God. His temples are present in every part of the country. However, many of these temples are not there in Tamil Nadu.

Kamakshi Amman Temple- This temple is for Goddess Kamakshi Amman. This huge temple spreads across 5 acres of land. The temple also houses a gallery, which presents the life history of Adi Shankaracharya.

Kanchi Kudil represents the life of the people of the city with a view to attract tourists and let them feel the essence of life as lived here. Kudil means house. Moreover, the house is over 90 year old and its architecture resembles the olden style.

Devarajaswami Temple- The temple is another place famous for its richness of exquisite sculptures. Vijayanagar Kings built this temple for lord Vishnu.

Photos:

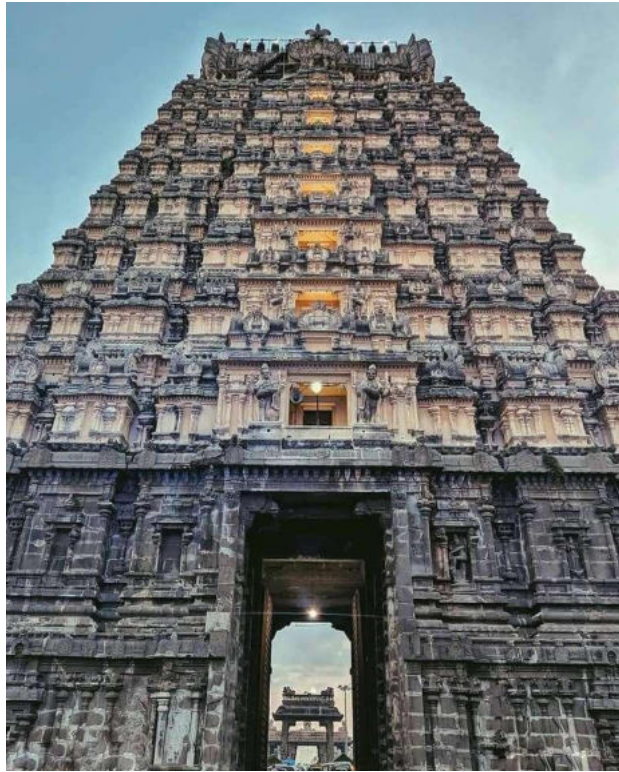


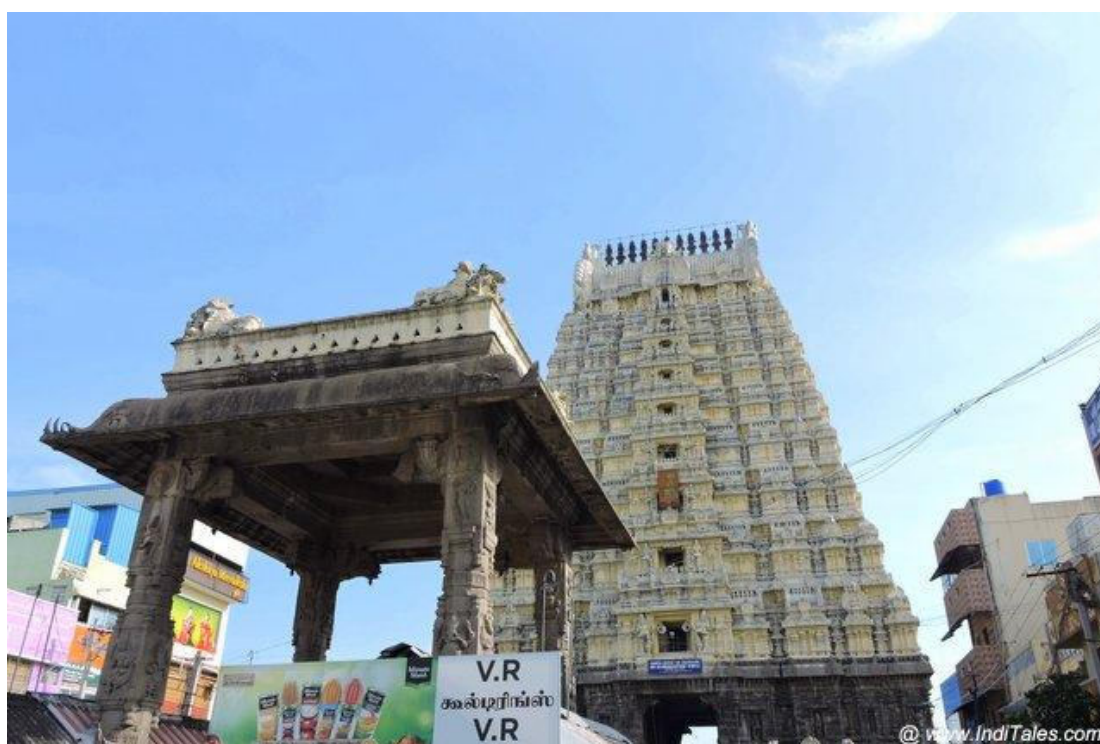
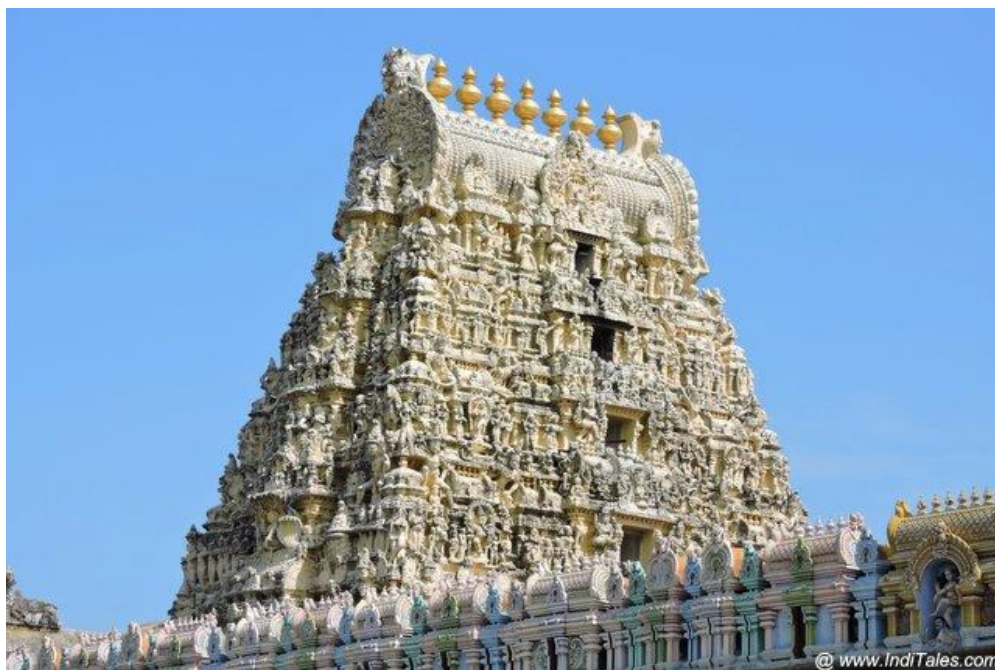










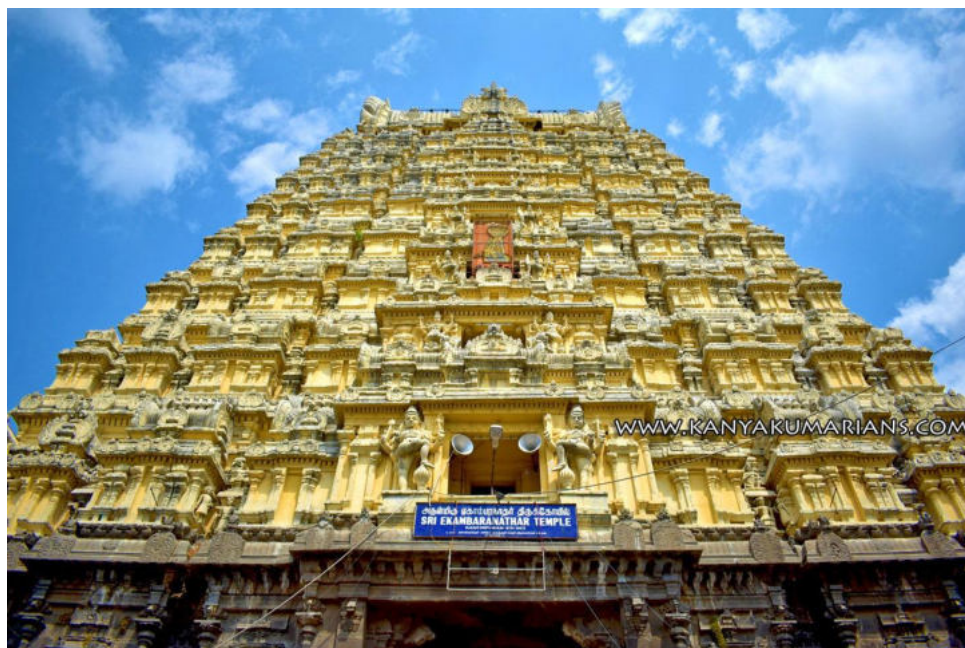




















Videos:

Ekambareswarar temple: <https://youtu.be/Zb0s-cZHKhE>

Ekambareswarar temple: <https://youtu.be/w3sBduDIstM>

Ekambaranathar temple: <https://youtu.be/QR-4IlsaWOo>

Ekambareswarar temple: https://youtu.be/gZ5L8_7SbXA

Ekambareswarar temple: <https://youtu.be/MLyXWhzWxuc>

Ekambareswarar temple: https://youtu.be/wxjAu5oTf_U

Ekambareswarar temple- history in Hindi: <https://youtu.be/z2jZWpAVuLU>

Ekambareswarar temple-Telugu: <https://youtu.be/iJ6F2xqTTgQ>

Ekambareswarar temple: <https://youtu.be/meQ668NVMag>

Earth lingam - Ekambareswarar Temple: <https://youtu.be/FytcluAiXU>

3500 year old mango tree in Ekambareswarar Temple: <https://youtu.be/DIOd4qNFudA>

Temple History - 3500 year old mango tree: <https://youtu.be/FEYXGFdHV3o>

Few hours in Kanchipuram temple: <https://youtu.be/jBb1Xkx37kg>

Ekambareswarar temple: <https://youtu.be/tlBbDdBy3yo>

Ekambareswarar temple-history in Kannada: <https://youtu.be/acgl6mfqJOU>

Ekambareswarar temple- unknown facts: <https://youtu.be/tsvUH0VNiIo>

Ekambareswarar temple- history, timings, Pooja etc: <https://youtu.be/hXx5SPwn-dE>

Ekambareswarar temple: <https://youtu.be/Dv4oo1X6O9U>

Ekambareswarar temple (Telugu): <https://youtu.be/ornw3JgLwLU>

Panchabhoota Sthalams- Five Shiva temples representing five elements of Nature

2. Jambukeswarar temple, Thiruvanaikaval

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Ref: Wikipedia

Jambukeswarar Temple, Thiruvanaikaval (also Thiruvanaikal, Jambukeswaram) is a famous Shiva temple in Tiruchirapalli (Trichy) district, in the state of Tamil Nadu, India. Though it is that Kocengannan (Kochengat Cholan), one of the Early Cholas, have built this temple. It is located in the Srirangam island, which has the famous Ranganathaswamy temple.

Thiruvanaikal is one of the five major Shiva Temples of Tamil Nadu (Pancha Bhoota Stalam) representing the Mahābhūta or five great elements; this temple represents the element of water, or neer in Tamil.[1] The sanctum of Jambukeswara has an underground water stream and in spite of pumping water out, it is always filled with water.[2]

It is one of the 275 Paadal Petra Sthalams, where all the four most revered Nayanars (Saivite Saints) have sung glories of the deity in this temple. The temple has inscriptions from the Chola period.

Legend

Once Parvati mocked Shiva's penance for betterment of the world. Shiva wanted to condemn her act and directed her to go to the earth from Kailasam (Shiva's abode) to do penance. Parvathi in the form of Akilandeswari as per Shiva's wish found Jambu forest (Thiruvanaikoil) to conduct her penance. She made a lingam out of water of river Cauvery (also called as river Ponni) under the Venn Naaval tree (the Venn Naaval tree on top of the saint Jambu) and commenced her worship. The lingam is known as Appu Lingam (Water Lingam).[3] Siva at last gave darshan to Akilandeswari and taught her Siva Gnana. Akilandeswari took Upadesa (lessons) facing East from Shiva, who stood facing west.[2][4]



The second precinct of the temple with pillars.

There were two Siva Ganas (Siva's disciples who live in Kailash): 'Malyavan' and 'Pushpadanta'. Though they are Siva Ganas they always quarrel with each other and fight for one thing or other. In one fight 'Malyavan' cursed 'Pushpadanta' to become an elephant on earth and the latter cursed the former to become a spider on earth. The elephant and the spider came to Jambukeswaram and continued their Siva worship. The elephant collected water from river Cauvery and conducted ablution to the lingam under the Jambu tree

(*Eugenia jambolana*, the java plum tree) daily.[5] The spider constructed his web over the lingam to prevent dry leaves from dropping on it and prevent sunlight directly falling on it. When the elephant saw the web and thought it was dust on lingam. The elephant tore them and cleaned the lingam by pouring water and the practice continued daily. The spider became angry one day and crawled into the trunk of the elephant and bit the elephant to death, killing itself. Siva, in the form of Jambukeswara, moved by the deep devotion of the two, relieved them from the curse. As an elephant worshipped Siva here, this place came to be known as Thiru Aanai Kaa (thiru means holy, aanai is elephant, kaa (kaadu) means forest).[2] Later the name 'Thiruaanaikaa' become 'Thiruvanaikaval' and 'Thiruvanaikoil'.

As an outcome of having committed a sin by killing the elephant, in the next birth, the spider was born as the King Kochengot Chola (kotchengannan cholan meaning red-eyed king) and built 70 temples and this temple is the one among them.[2] The account of the Chola building seventy temples along with this temple is mentioned in Nalayira Divya Prabandham.[6] Remembering his enmity with the elephant in his previous birth, he built the Siva Sannathi (sanctorum) such that not even a small elephant can enter. The entrance on the sanctorum of Jambukeswara is only 4 foot high and 2.5 foot wide.[2]

There was a story behind the king's red eyes - When he was in his mother's womb the palace astrologer predicted a sacred time to give birth to enable the newborn's well-being. The queen went into labor early, before the time predicted by the astrologer. The queen hence told the servant to hang her upside down for the time to come so that she could have a wise and virtuous son who could head the kingdom righteously. This waiting time inside the womb made the baby's eyes red. After becoming the king, he built the temple for Siva and Goddess Akilandeswari in the name of Aanaikka (elephant protected) later days it changed to Thiruvanaikovil.

Architecture



The stone Vibudi Prakara (Compound Wall), which extends for over one mile, is two feet thick and over 25 feet in height.

As per Fergusson, the temple surpasses the Srirangam Ranganathaswamy temple in architectural terms, which were both constructed at the same time.[3][7] There are five enclosures inside the temple. The massive outer wall covering the fifth precinct, known as the Vibudi Prakara, stretches over a mile and is two feet thick and over 25 feet high. Legend maintains that the wall was built by Shiva working with the laborers.[2] The fourth precinct

contains a hall with 796 pillars and measures 2436 feet by 1493.[8] It also has a small tank fed by perpetual springs.[7] The third enclosure is 745 feet by 197 surrounded a wall 30 feet high. This area has two gopurams (gateway towers) 73 and 100 feet tall, a coconut thoppu and a small water tank.[8] The second enclosure is 306 feet by 197, a gopuram 65 feet high and several small shrines.[8] The inner most enclosure measuring 126 feet by 123 has the sanctum.[8]



Images of various gateway towers in the temple

The sanctum sanctorum is a square structure, found independently situated at the center of the innermost enclosure. There is a vimana on the roof of the sanctum. The structure is open on three sides, with a shallow moat separating it from the circumambulatory path of the innermost enclosure. The sthala-vriksham, or holy tree here is the White Jambuka (Tamil: வெண் நாவல் மரம்) (*Syzygium cumini*), found growing along the south-eastern wall of

the sanctum sanctorum. The trunk of the tree is protected by a walled structure. The western side of the sanctum, from where the deity is viewed, is continuous with a large closed hall, the Mukha Mantapa, containing four-pillars and housing a bronze idol of Nandi. The Mukha Mantapa has a large, ornate western door gilded with silver that forms the principal entrance. There are two additional entrances to the Mukha Mantapa on the southern and North Eastern sides as well. A set of three steps descend to the level of the sanctum sanctorum from the Mukha Mantapa. The deity is viewed through a stone window that forms an integral part of the western face of the sanctum sanctorum. The window has nine viewing apertures, believed to represent the Navagraha. There is a panel in bas-relief over the window depicting the sthala puranam: The jambuka tree growing out of a meditating sage's head on the extreme right; the linga of Jambukeswarar under the tree; a spider and an elephant worshipping the linga along with the Goddess Parvati who stands to the left of the linga. The sanctum sanctorum is divided into the Ardha Mantapam or Antaralam (whose western wall bears the window) and the Garbha Griha where the deity of Jambukeswarar is housed. Entrance into the Sanctum is through a small door on the southern wall, about 4 feet in height. The Ardha Mantapa is about 4 feet X 4 feet and contains an idol of Goddess Parvati on the right side of the door to the Garbha Griha. Devotees are admitted in groups of six into the Ardha Mantapa during sevas like Abhishekam or on payment of a small fee. The Garbha Griha is a wider structure compared to the Ardha Mantapa. At the center, the Brahma Sthana, is the self-manifested linga of Jambukeswarar. The upper conical part of the linga is of the color of copper, whereas the yoni-bhaga or the pedestal is of black granite. A brass ring is seen at the point of attachment of the linga to the pedestal. The height of the linga is about 3 feet from the floor of the sanctum. The Garbha Griha and the Ardha Mantapa are unadorned from the inside, the only source of illumination within the sanctum being ghee lamps. A stream of water is said to emerge from the linga, which is usually demonstrated as the soaking wet clothes in which it is draped. The water flow increases significantly during the Monsoon. The main deity of the temple is Jambukeswara, representing the element water. Jambukeswara is depicted sitting under a jambu tree, which grows over a small stream that engulfs the deity during the rainy season. The temple is also considered the abode of goddess Akilandeshwari, one of the forms of the goddess Parvati. The greatest of works related to this temple include Tiruvanaikaval and Kilvelur Akshyalingaswamy temple. [Explain]

Goddess Akilandeshwari's shrine

The temples idols are installed opposite to each other - Such temples are known as Upadesa Sthalams. As the Devi was like a student and Jambukeswara like a Guru (teacher) in this temple, there is no Thiru Kalyanam (marriage) conducted in this temple for Shiva and Parvathi, unlike the other Shiva temples. The sannathy of the goddess Akilandeshwari and the sannathy of Prasanna Vinayaka are in the shape of the pranava mantra called "Aum". It is believed that the Amman in the temple was in deep anger hence during one of Adi Sankara's visit he installed the Prasanna Ganapathy idol right opposite to her Sannathy and installed a pair of Sri Chakra thaatankas (ear-rings) to reduce her anger.[2]



A lingam inside the temple

The sculpture of Ekapada Trimurti, an aspect of Shiva with the deities Vishnu and Brahma emerging from it, is present in the temple, which can be seen only in Thyagaraja Temple, Tiruvottiyur.[1][2]

There are lot of inscriptions from various Chola kings from 11th - 12th century indicating grants to the temple.[2] The temple was widely expanded by Hoysala king, Someswara, the son of Vira Narasimha.[9] During 1236-37 CE, he built a lot of shrines namely Vallalishwara, Padumalishwara, Vira Narasingeswara and Somleswara evidently named after his grandfather Ballalla II, grandmother Padmaladevei, father Vira Narasimha and aunt Somala Devi.[9] The 7-tiered rajagopuram is also believed to have constructed by the Hoysala king.[9] There are separate shrines beyond the temple compound namely Aadhi having a typical structure as the main shrines. The temple and its pagodas were subject to frequent conquest between French and English forces between 1751 and 1755 CE.[10] The temple is being widely maintained by Vellalars and the Nattukottai Chettiars during the 19th and early 20th centuries.[11]

Religious significance of the temple

Pancha Bhoota Sthalam (Sanskrit: पञ्चभूतस्थलानि Pañcabhūtasthalāni) refers to the five Shiva temples,[12] each representing the manifestation of the five prime elements of nature - space, air, fire, water, earth.[13] Pancha indicates five, Bhoota means elements and Sthala means place. All these temples are located in South India with four of these temples at Tamil Nadu and one at Andhra Pradesh. The five elements are believed to be enshrined in the five

lingams[12] and each of the lingams representing Shiva in the temple have five different names based on the elements they represent. In the temple, Shiva is said to have manifested himself in the form of water (Appu Lingam). The other four manifestations are Prithivi Lingam (representing land) at Ekambareswarar Temple,[14] Akasa Lingam (representing sky)[12] at Thillai Nataraja Temple, Chidambaram,[14] Agni Lingam (representing fire)[15] at Annamalaiyar Temple[14] and Vayu Lingam (representing air) at Srikalahasti Temple.[14][16]

Culture

In the third enclosure, there is a coconut grove having a small tank where the festival image of Vaishnavite Srirangam temple used to be brought one day a year. As Akilandeswari worshipped Lord Shiva in this temple, even today at noon the 'Archakar' (priest) dresses like a female and does Pooja to Jambukeswara and 'Go Maatha' (Cow).[1] The noon pooja is very famous and a host of pilgrims attend it every day. A special variety of black cow, called Karum Pasu is used for the occasion. Annabhishekam to lingam (ablution with cooked rice) is a daily ritual performed in the temple. The temple is one of the hosts for the annual Natyanjali, a festival of classical Indian dance. The temple has also a school for training nadhaswaram, a classical pipe instrument in Tamil Nadu.

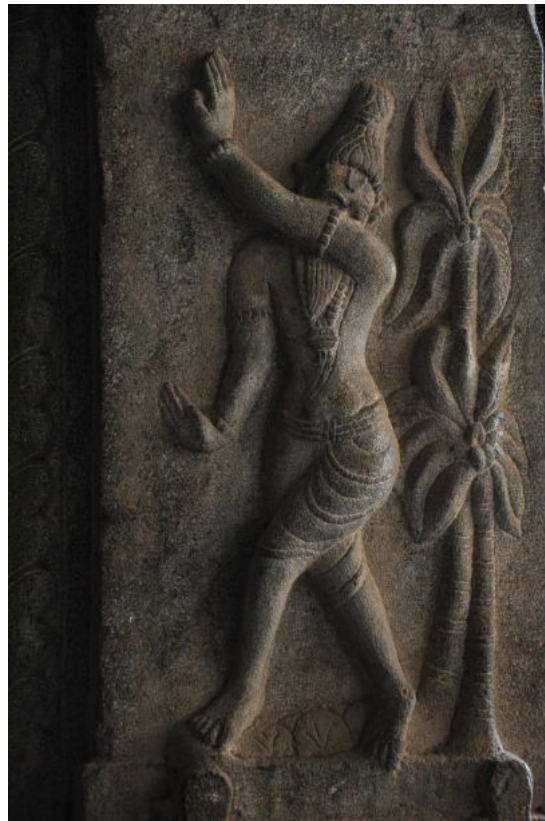
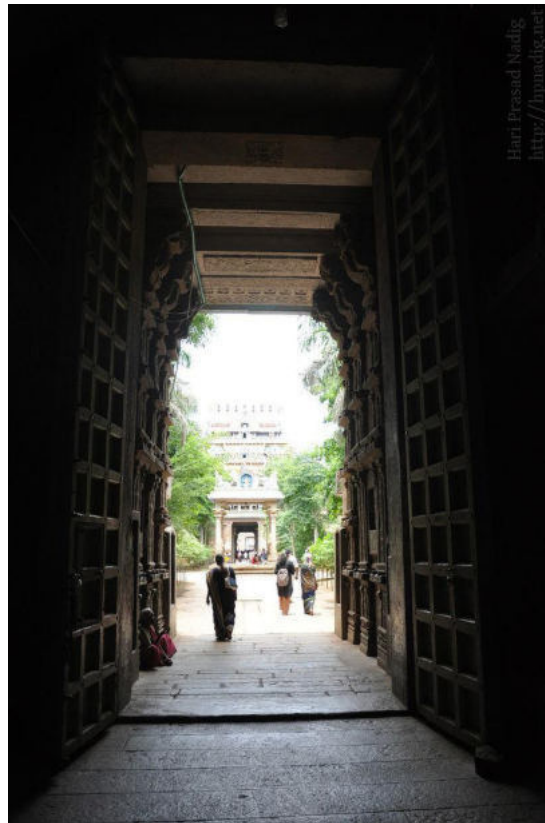
There is a legend that Parvathi worshipped Shiva here and installed the idol in the sanctum. Following the legend, a priest performs the pooja every day. It is believed that Adi Sankara offered ear rings called Thadanga to Akilandeshwari. There are a total of nine waterbodies associated with the temple.[17]

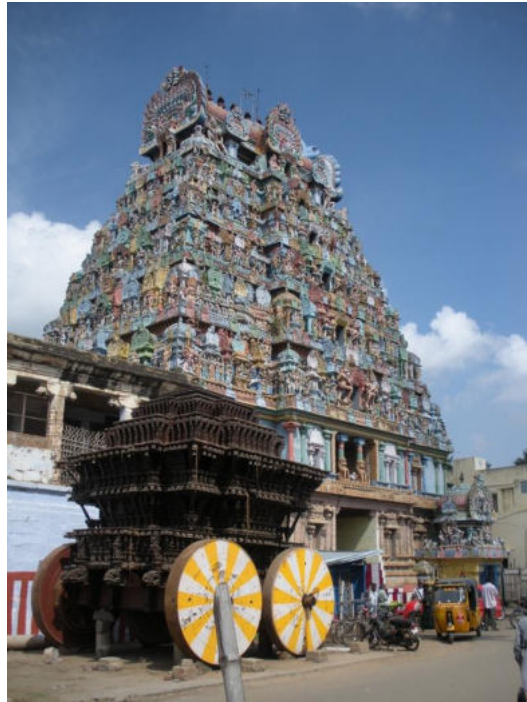


Administration

The temple is maintained and administered by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Department of the Government of Tamil Nadu.[18]

Gallery





Ref: thiruvanaikavaltemple.tnhrce.in (official website of temple)

History

Arulmigu Jambukeswarar Akhilandeswari Temple - History

This temple is situated in Coromandel between two rivers, Cauvery in south, Coleroon in North. It is one of the five element shrines or Pancha Bootha sthalams and is renowned for the worship of Lord Siva as representing the element of water (appulinga).

As an Elephant was blessed here after worshipping here, this temple came to be known as 'Thiruvanaikka'. As Lord Siva is seated below Jambu tree at this temple, it got its name Jambukeswaram. When Goddess Ahilandeswari penanced here, Lord Siva satisfied by her prayer blessed her. For this reason this temple is also known as Gnanashethram.

A spider, which worshipped Lord Jambukeswarar in its previous life, was blessed to be born as Kochengat cholan in its next birth. He constructed this temple about 2500 years ago. Uma Deviyar, Thirumal, Brahman, Attathikku Balakhar, Attavasukkal, Jambu Munivar, Gowthamar, Aghasthiyar, a spider known as Gananatharul maliyavan, an elephant named Pushbadhanthan, Suryan and Chandran attained glory by worshipping at this temple.

Thirugnana Sambanthar, Appar, Sundarar, Arunagirinathar, Iyyadigal kadawarkon, Thayumanavar have enchanted the glory of Lord Jambukeswarar in their literary works. Goddess blessed poet Kalamega Pulavar with the talent to write poems at this temple.

This temple is endowed with 5 praharams.(corridor) As lord Siva himself built the 5th praharam, appearing in the form of Spider, it is known as 'Thiruneettan thirumathil'. It is here lord Siva blessed a spider and elephant to attain moksha.

Monolithic stone pillars (made from single stone) are found in the mandapam, situated at the entrance of Aariyavittan tower in 3rd Praharam. Stone chains and 12 zodiac signs are beautifully carved on these pillars. Pillars found in 1000 pillar hall and in various parts of temple have artistic sculptural works. Temple cars In the year 1910, 2 big temple cars were made for god & goddess. 'Coratham'(used for procession) and several wooden Vahanas are present in this temple. Inscriptions 156 Inscriptions have been found at this temple. Inscriptions of King Madurai konda Parakesari varman paranthaka cholan is the oldest among them. Informations about renovations and wealth of this temple are found in these inscriptions.

Benefits of worshipping at this temple:

Devotees worshipping here are blessed both in this birth and in next birth. One who worships Goddess Ahilandeswari will be blessed with good education and intelligence, marriage and wishes for child are fulfilled. By coming around the fifth divine wall known as "Thiruneetran thirumathil" one with gets fulfilled.

Arulmigu Jambukeswarar Akhilandeswari Temple - Pooja Time

Sl.No	Pooja	Timings
1.	Ushakkala Pooja	6:30 A.M to 7:30 A.M
2.	Kaalasandhi Pooja	8:00 A.M to 8:45 A.M
3.	Uchikkala Pooja	11:00 A.M to 12:00 P.M
4.	Saayaraksha Pooja	5:00 P.M to 5:45 P.M
5.	Ardhajama Pooja	9:00 P.M



Festivals

Arulmigu Jambukeswarar Akhilandeswari Temple - Festival

Holy Water Points:

Sreemath Theertham: This is nothing but the water spring oozing inside the Sanctorum of Lord Shiva.

Rama Theertham: This is outside the temple. Just directly opposite to the temple across the G.S.T Road. You can see this on the way to the Srirangam. This is where the "Thai Poosam theppam" festival is celebrated. This Theertham is full of beautiful Lotus flower plants.

Chandra Theertham

Agni Theertham: This is the well in the South East corner of 3rd Praharam. Just opposite on the side of Vasantha Mandapam and temple Nandhavanam.

Indira Theertham : This is in the 3rd Praharam opposite to Kasi Viswanatha Swami sannathi.

Akasthiya Theertham

Jambu Theertham: This is in the South West 3rd Praharam near the old Jambukeshwara temple (Opposite to Sangareshwarar temple and opposite to Kubera Linga)

Surya Theertham: This is in the South West corner of the 4th praharam. Just opposite to the 1000 pillar mandapam. This Tank is architecturally beautifully built with two stories of Mandapams around the tank. Each mandapam built with 100 pillars. "Theppam" festival is celebrated in this tank in the Tamil month "Aadi" on "Pooram" day (the day when the star is Pooram, which is the star of Akilandeswari).

Brahmma Theertham: This is in the South side of 4th Praharam (South Car Street)

Agamam

Magudagamam, Karanagamam

Sacred Tree:

White Jambu tree

Vaikasi - Vasantha Urchavam (10 days)

Aadi - Aadipuram festival (10 days),Aadi Friday is celebrated.

Purattasi - Navarathiri festival (10 days)

Thai - Thai Poosam, Thai theppam (Float) festival Special poojas are performed during Fridays of Thai month.

Panguni - Brahmotsavam (40 days)

Car festival and Panchaprakara festival are important festivals.

Services

Arulmigu Jambukeswarar Akhilandeswari Temple - Annadhanam

*"The Best Donation is Food Donation one Who Gives food, gives Life."

The temple implements the Honourable Tamilnadu Cheif Minister's "Food Donation " 50 persons are provided Food Daily.

Person Willing to provide "Food donation" in their name can give it by pay Rs2,000/- per day.(saturday 3,000/-) and can get the receipt for the same.Or can pay Rs.20,000/- as fixed deposit and with its interest can provide 'food donation' during their birthday,marriage day,etc.

Arulmigu Jambukeswarar Akhilandeswari Temple - Administration

Assistant commissioner / Executive Officer
Arulmigu Jambukeswarar Akhilandeswari Temple,
Thiruvanaikkaval
Thiruvaramkam Taluk
Trichy District - 620 005

Phone - 0431 2230257

E-Mail - jambukeswarar@tnhrce.org

Tourist information

Sri Ranganathar Swamy Temple

Srirangam is the foremost of the eight self-manifested shrines (Swayam Vyakta Kshetras) of Lord Vishnu . It is also considered the first, foremost and the most important of the 108 main Vishnu temples (Divyadesams). This temple is also known as Thiruvaramba Tirupati, Periyakoil, Bhooloka Vaikundam, Bhogamandabam. In the Vaishnava parlance the term "KOIL" signifies this temple only. The temple is enormous in size.Lalgudi is one of the Town in Lalgudi Taluk in Tiruchirappalli District

Srirangam - The centre of Prime importance of the hundred and eight Vaishnava Temples. The Lord is Sri Renga - the Temple is situated between the Coleroon and the Cauvery River.

Arulmigu saptharisheswara Temple

The temple here has won a unique place among the temples of Tamilnadu. It was here only the seven rishis, atri, brihu, pulsithar, vasistha, gauthamar, aneerasar and marichi, prayed to the presiding deity, saptharisheswarar, to ward off the bad period they were passing through. The temple was taken up for being extended by the parantaka kings.This is an ancient temple about 500-1000 years old

Website : www.saptharisheswarartemple.tnhrce.in

Arulmigu Vekkalaimman Temple

It is dedicated to Lord Mother Vekkali Amman graces majestically sitting on a Yoga Peeta facing north. She is holding trident, Udukkai, the rope-pasam and Akshaya Patra (a vessel from which food would be constantly flowing to feed all beings) in Her four hands. Bangles, Mangalsutra, pearl chain, necklace, crown on the head are shining on Her form. Her left leg is on the demon and the right bent.

Woraiyur was the capital of the Chozhas during the Sangam Age. According to Chekkizhar, a renowned Tamil poet, woraiyur contains all the great beauties of the world.

Website : www.woraiyurvekkaliamman.tnhrce.in

Arulmigu Gneelivaneswarar Temple

God Shiva in this temple is called as Gneelivaneswarar. Shiva is in the form Suyambu linga (suyambu means it came from earth, it's not made by anyone). There are many names for Shiva in this temple like Kathali Vasanthar, Gneelivaneswarar, Paramasambu, Aaraniya Vallaver, Eluthariya Peruman. But the famous and well known name is Gneelivaneswarar.

Website : www.gneelivaneshwarartemple.tnhrce.in

Arulmigu Samayapuram Mariamman Temple

It is dedicated to Lord Samayapurathal or Mariamman is made of sand and clay like many of the traditional Mariamman deities, and hence unlike many other Hindu deities there are no abhishekams (sacred washing) conducted to the main deity, but instead the "abishekam" is done to the small stone statue in front of it.

Website : www.samayapurammariammantemple.tnhrce.in

Rock Fort:

Rock-Fort - The Temple that adds to the beauty of the city - God Ganapathy is at the top of Rock and Lord Thayumanaswamy blesses as the father and mother.

Vayalur - Temple of Lord Muruga, Lord of TAMIZHIANS - 5 Kms in the west of Trichy.

Picnic Spots:

Mukkombu - A wonderful picnic spot, where the river Kollidam branches off from the river Cavery. It is 18 kilometer from Trichy City.

Kallanai - 20 Kms from Trichy - an ancient Dam built by Karikar chozhan

Ref: thehindu.com

Mahakumbabishekam performed at Jambukeswarar temple after 18 years:

Jambukeswarar temple at Tiruvanaikkaval gets a facelift after 18 years



Jambukeswaram, a place filled with Jambu trees (rose apple) — this is another name for Tiruvanaikkaval, one of the Panchabhuta locations of Siva, famous for the Akhilandeswari temple.

Siva manifests Himself as water (Appu) here, the sanctum of Jambukeswarar always surrounded by water. The ancient Chola temple is getting ready for kumbabishekam on December 12, 6 a.m.-7.15 a.m.

Located on the Northern banks of Cauvery, the temple was the first 'Maada Koil' built by Ko Chenganan Chozhan who went on to build 70 more including the Divya Desam at Nachiyar Koil.

Thiru Gnana Sambandar, Appar, Sundarar and Manikkavachagar have sung hymns in praise of this Thevaram Sthalam.

Consecration took place last in 2000. Restoration is taking place in phases and in accordance with the conditions laid out by the Madras High Court for renovation of temples, only minor works have been undertaken in this phase. The tall gopurams in the East and the West wear a fresh bright look after a new coat of painting. Most of the mandapams and pillars have been water washed. Jambu Theertham, one of the Nava Theerthams, has a new fence.

One of the highlights is that the 1,000-pillared mandapam, one of the few in Tamil Nadu, which remained as a dark zone, has been opened up for light.



The electrification in the entire temple has been revamped with wires, which had been dangerously hanging loose, safely encased in ducts.

A few of the mounts, which carry the deity during Brahmotsavam, have been refurbished. The rest will be taken up in the next phase. This Brahmotsavam will see the utsavar on new serpent and elephant vahanas.

With the approval from the Renovation Committee, in Phase 2, the huge granary opposite the Akilandeswari Sannidhi will be restored. The Theppa Kulam - Rama Theertham, where the Thai Poosam festival is celebrated in a grand way and a water treatment plant to recycle the abhisekam water to the newly planned Nandavanam are also on the agenda.

It has been planned to plant trees such as Aththi, Vilvam, Iluppai, Vaazhai and Naaval on either side of the eastern rajagopuram. In a couple of years, the saplings would grow to provide a green landscape to the premises.

Gajaranya Kshetra Mahatmyam describes the specialities of Tiruvanaikkaval. There is an interesting story behind Ko Chenganan's edifice. An elephant was in the habit of performing daily puja to a Siva Lingam, standing in the open. A spider spun its web over the lingam as a roof.

The elephant would sweep away the web with its trunk and the insect would weave another web. One day the frustrated spider got into the elephant's trunk and planted its poisonous bite. The animal died and the spider too trapped inside the trunk. Having served Siva both reached Kailasa.

While the elephant wanted the place, where he worshipped and died after him, the spider wanted to build lasting temples.

So Tiruvanaikka got its name. The spider was born as Ko Chenganan, who built several temples. And he made sure that there was no way an elephant could enter the temples. Tiruvanaikkaval was the first of the 'Maada Koils' built by him. The entrance of these structures are too narrow for a jumbo to enter or too high that it cannot climb.

The legendary episode of Jambukeswarar and Akhilandeswari swapping their roles and providing darshan to Brahma is enacted every year on the Rohini day in the Panguni month as part of the Pancha Prakara utsavam, with the divine couple going on a five-prakaram procession through the night.

Ref: astroved.com

Jambukeswarar Temple, Thiruvanaikaval



Introduction

The Jambukeswarar Temple in Thiruvanaikaval is renowned in Tiruchirapalli district, in the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu. The temple is dedicated to Shiva. The principal deity is Swayambhu (self-manifested). The temple lies in Srirangam island, which also has another famous temple, the Ranganathaswamy Temple.

The temple is being administered by the HR& CE department of the Government of Tamil Nadu.

Legend of Jambukeswarar Temple

An interesting legend about the temple narrates an incident where Goddess Parvati incurred the wrath of Shiva when she mocked the penance that Shiva had undertaken for the betterment of the world. Shiva was annoyed and to punish her, told her to go down to earth, and do penance. A chastened Parvathi took the form of Akilandeswari and descended to earth from her abode, Kailasam. She chose Jambu forest (Thiruvanaikoil) as the site for her penance. Making a lingam using the water from the Cauvery river, (also called Ponni), she placed it under the Venn Naaval tree on top of the saint Jambu and began her worship. This lingam is called Appu Lingam. Here, 'Appu' means water.

Eventually, Shiva granted darshan to Akilandeswari and imparted Shiva Gnana to her. Akilandeswari took the Upadesa (lessons) while facing East from Shiva, who was facing west.

Another legend is about two Shiva Ganas who were under a curse and found redemption by worshipping Shiva at this temple. The two Shiva Ganas (Ganas are the disciples of Shiva who lived in Kailasam), were named 'Malyavan' and 'Pushpadanta.' They were very quarrelsome and used to fight with each other constantly. During one such fight, they cursed each other. While 'Malyavan' cursed 'Pushpadanta' to become an elephant, Pushpadanta cursed the former to become a spider.

The two then came down to earth and made their way to Jambukeswaram, where they continued to worship Shiva. The elephant collected water from the Cauvery river and performed ablutions to the Lingam that was under the Jambu (rose apple) tree daily. As for the spider, it spun a web over the Lingam to prevent the withered leaves from falling on it. The web also ensured that sunlight did not fall directly on it. The elephant noticed the web and mistook it for dust. Hence, the elephant removed the web and washed the Lingam clean by pouring water on it. It continued this practice daily. Angry over this, the spider crept into the trunk of the elephant and bit the elephant to death. It also killed itself in the process.

Shiva, as Jambukeswara, was moved by the great devotion of the two creatures and removed their curse. Because an elephant worshipped Shiva here, the place came to be called Thiru Aanai Kaa (thiru means sacred, aanai means elephant, and kaa (kaadu) means forest). Later the name 'Thiruaanaikaa' became 'Thiruvanaikaval' and 'Thiruvanaikoil.'

Since the spider had committed a sin by killing the elephant, in its next birth, it was born as the Chola king, Kochengot or Kotchengannan (the red-eyed one). During his lifetime, he built 70 temples, including this temple. This fact finds mention in the work, Nalayira Divya Prabandham. In remembrance of his feud with the elephant in his previous birth, the king also built the Shiva Sannidhi (sanctorum) in such a way that not even a calf elephant could enter it.

The entrance to the sanctorum of Jambukeswara is just 4 feet-high and 2.5 feet wide.

A story gives the reason for the king's red-colored eyes. When his mother was pregnant with him, the palace astrologer recommended an auspicious time for the birth. This, he said, would ensure the infant's well-being. But the queen went into early labor before the predicted time. The queen then asked her maid to hang her upside down to delay the birth until the auspicious hour arrived because she wanted a wise and virtuous son who would rule the kingdom righteously. As the baby had to wait inside the mother's womb for a while, his eyes became red. Once he became the king, he built the temple for Shiva and Goddess Akilandeswari. The name given to it was Aanaikka (protected from an elephant), which later became Thiruvanaikovil.

History of Jambukeswarar Temple

According to history, a sage named Jambu performed severe penance to Shiva in this place. Pleased with his devotion, Shiva granted him darshan (sacred view) and offered him the

Naaval fruit (blackberry) as Prasadam. The sage consumed the seeds too as he did not want to spit out the seeds, considering it to be a sin. Once the seeds reached his stomach, they began to grow into a tree and pierced his head. Sage Jambu thus attained salvation. As Shiva granted salvation to the sage, he is known as Jambukeswarar here.

The temple was built by King Kochenga Chola, an early Chola ruler, around 1,800 years ago.

Architecture of Jambukeswarar Temple

The architectural splendor of the temple is highly noteworthy. It has five enclosures. There is a massive outer wall that covers the fifth precinct. It is called the Vibhuti Prakara and stretches over a mile. Legend has it that the wall was built by Shiva, who worked along with the laborers. There are inscriptions from the Chola era that can be seen here.

The presiding deity is Jambukeswarar, who represents the element, water. The sanctum sanctorum is square in structure and lies at the center of the innermost enclosure, with a Vimana on the roof. Open on three sides, the sanctum has a shallow moat that separates it from the circumambulatory path of the innermost enclosure.

The sanctum's western side, from where the worshippers can view the deity, has a large closed hall, called the Mukha Mantapa. This has four pillars and a bronze idol of Shiva's vehicle, Nandi. The Mantapa also has a large, ornate western door that is gilded with silver. This is the main entrance.

From the Mukha Mantapa, a set of three steps descend to the area of the sanctum sanctorum. The deity is viewed through a stone window that is an integral part of the sanctum's western face. The window's nine viewing apertures are said to represent the Navagrahas. A panel in bas-relief over the window depicts the Sthala Puranam - the Jambuka tree growing out of the meditating sage's head, the Lingam of Jambukeswarar beneath the tree; an elephant and a spider worshipping the Lingam, and Goddess Parvati, who is seen to the left of the Lingam.

The idols in the temple face each other. Such temples are called Upadesa Sthalams. As the Goddess was like a student and Jambukeswara like a teacher or Guru, in this temple, Thiru Kalyanam (marriage) ceremonies are not conducted here for Shiva and Parvati, in contrast to other Shiva temples. The shrine of Goddess Akilandeswari and that of Prasanna Vinayaka are in the shape of an Om, the Pranava Mantra.

Legend goes that the Amman here was in a very angry mood. So, Adi Sankara, during one of his visits, installed an idol of Prasanna Ganapati opposite to her shrine, and a pair of Sri Chakra Thaatanakas or earrings to cool her anger. A sculpture of Ekapada Trimurti, an aspect of Shiva along with the deities, Vishnu, and Brahma, emerging from it, can be found in the temple. This can be seen only in Thyagaraja temple, Tiruvottiyur. Many inscriptions from various Chola kings from the 11th - 12th century can be seen here.

The holy tree or Sthala Vriksham is the White Jambuka (Venn Naval in Tamil and rose apple in English). The Theertham is the Nava Theertham.

Significance of Jambukeswarar Temple

This temple is one among the five prominent Shiva temples in Tamil Nadu. Collectively, they are called the Pancha Bhoota Sthalams, and they represent the five elements of air, water, fire, earth, and space. The Jambukeswarar temple represents the water element. Its sanctum has a subterranean stream that is always filled with water, though the authorities keep pumping it out regularly.

One of the 275 Paadal Petra Sthalams, the four most revered Saivite saints or Nayanmars, as they are called, have sung the praises of this temple's deity. This is the 60th temple dedicated to Shiva on the northern bank of the Cauvery river that finds praise in the Thevaram hymns.

The main deity is Jambukeswara, who represents the element, water. Jambukeswara is shown sitting under a Jambu tree, which grows over a small stream that covers the deity during the monsoons. Supposedly, a stream of water flows from the Lingam, and the soaking wet clothes it is draped in seem to bear this out. The flow of water is more during the monsoons.

As Goddess Akilandeswari worshipped Shiva in this temple, at noon, the priest dresses like a female and performs a pooja for Jambukeswara and 'Go Maatha' (cow). This pooja is very famous, and many pilgrims attend it daily. A special kind of black cow, called Karum Pasu, is used for the pooja.

This temple forms one of the venues for the annual Natyanjali.

Benefits of Worshipping at Jambukeswarar Temple

Devotees perform Abishekam and offer Vastras to Shiva and Mother Akilandeswari. It is said that by worshipping here, one will be able to attain freedom from the cycle of birth and death. Those who wish to get married, have progeny, high yields in farming and abundance of water, visit this temple. The Goddess also bestows good intelligence and education to her devotees.

Festivals Celebrated at Jambukeswarar Temple

The temple celebrates the Brahmotsavam in the Tamil month of Panguni in March-April and Aadi Pooram and Fridays in the months of July-August on an elaborate scale. Navaratri is celebrated on a large scale in the Tamil month of Purattasi.

The temple also celebrates the Theppam (Float) festival on Thai Poosam, in the Tamil month of Thai. Special poojas are conducted on Fridays in the month of Thai. Vasantha Urchavam is celebrated for ten days in the Tamil month of Vaikasi. Karthigai Deepam, Margazhi Thiruvathirai Utsavam, and the Pancha Prakara are the other festivals celebrated here.

Temple Timings

Morning: 05.30 am – 01.00 pm.

Evening: 03.00 pm – 08.30 pm.

How to Reach Jambukeswarar Temple

By Air

Chathiram Bus Stand is located 3 kilometers away from the temple. Buses, autos, and taxis can take one to the temple, which is very accessible as it is on the Trichy-Chennai highway.

By Rail

The Trichy Junction lies 8 kilometers away from the temple and is the nearest railway station.

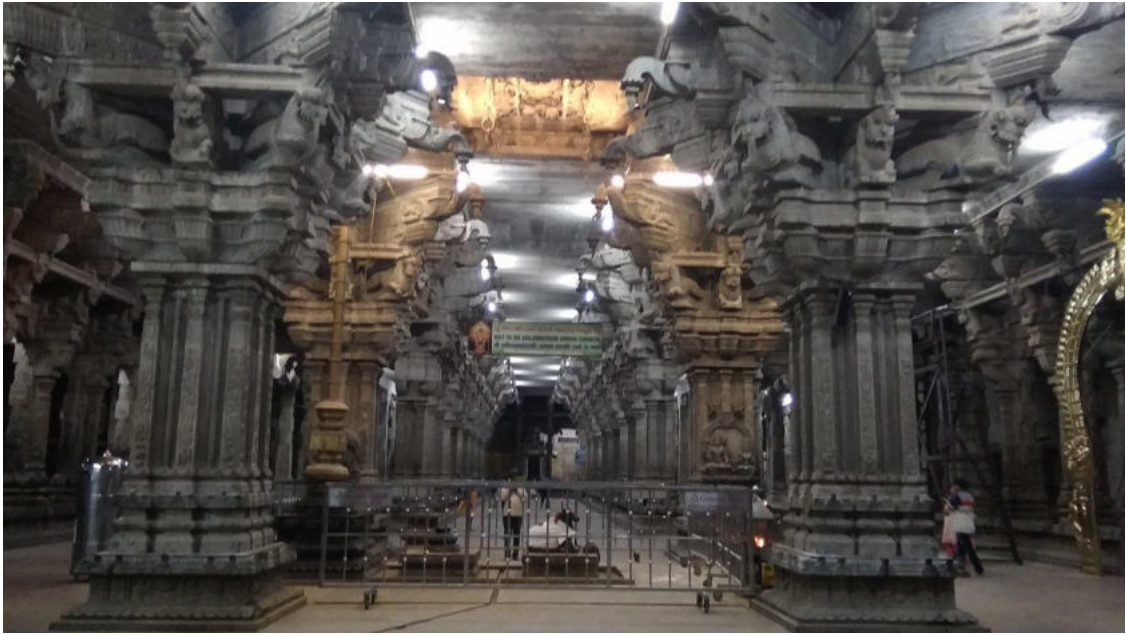
By Road

Trichy (Tiruchirapalli) is the nearest airport, which lies 15 kilometers away. Local transport is available from the airport to the temple.

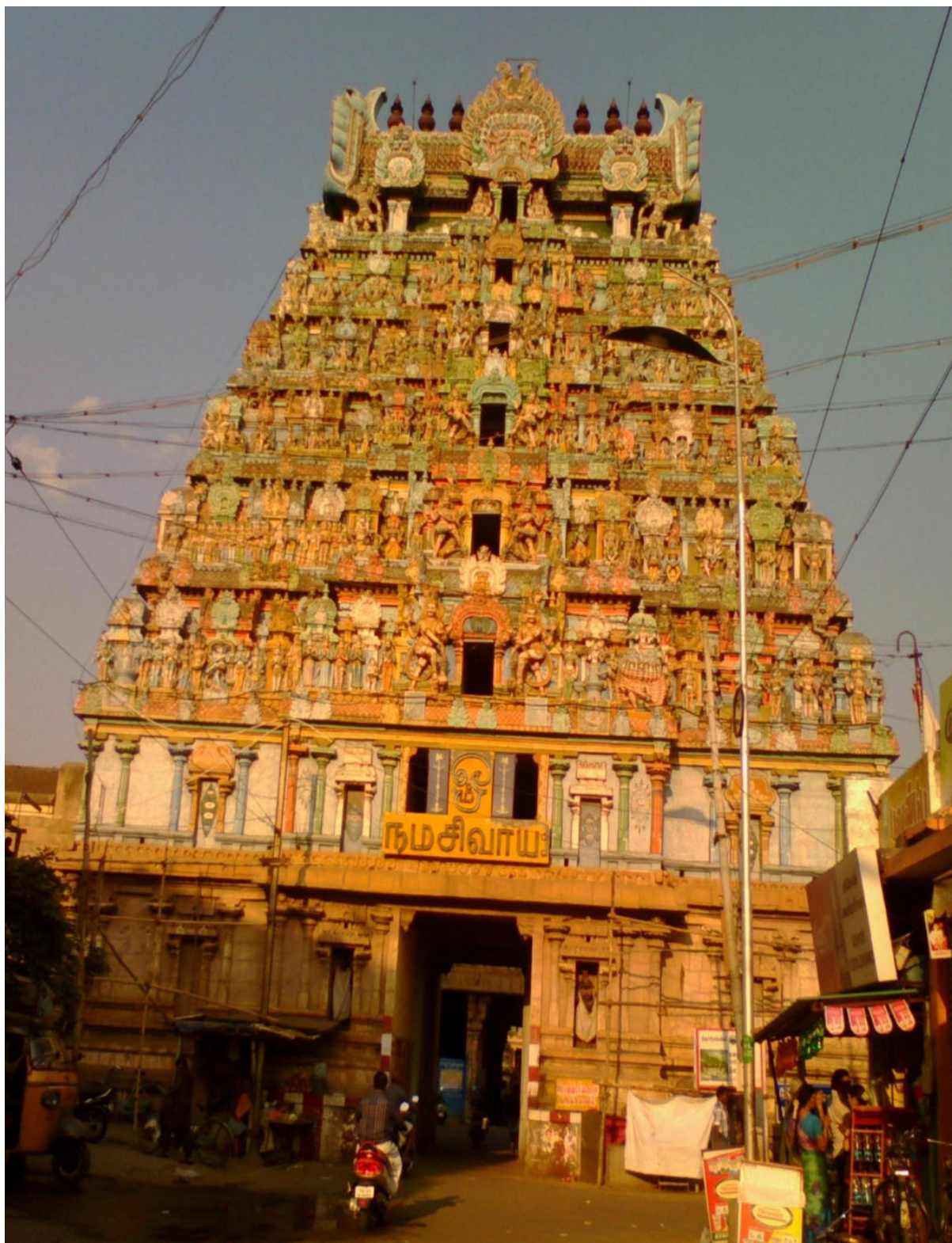
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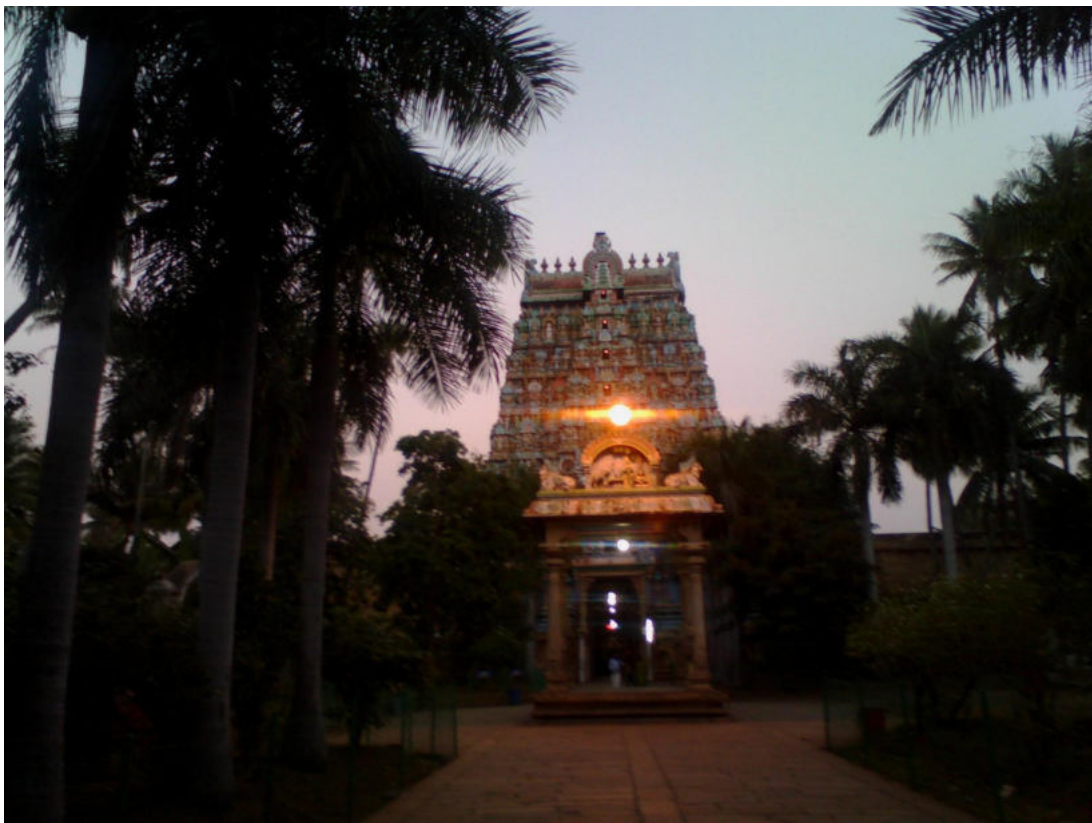
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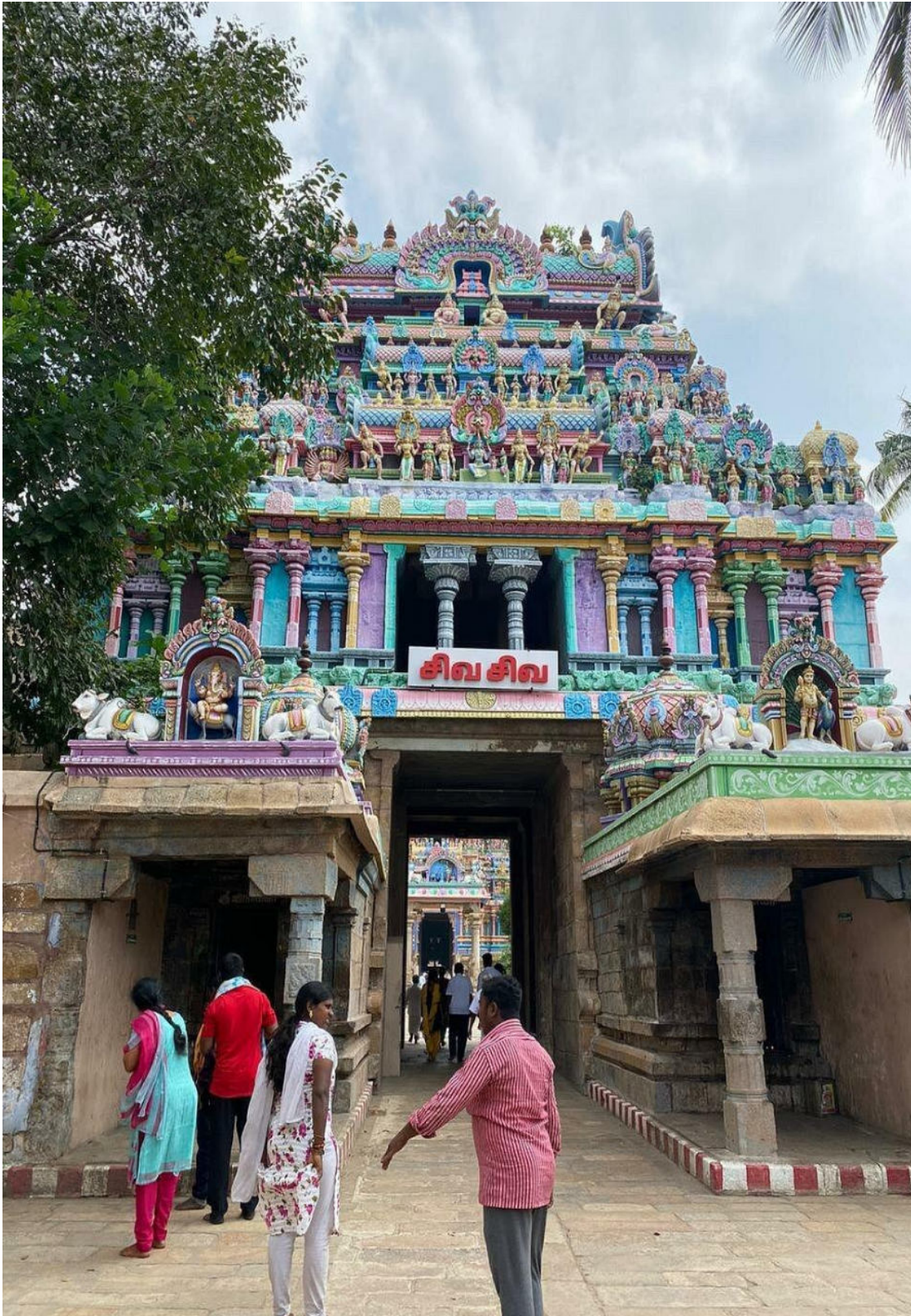




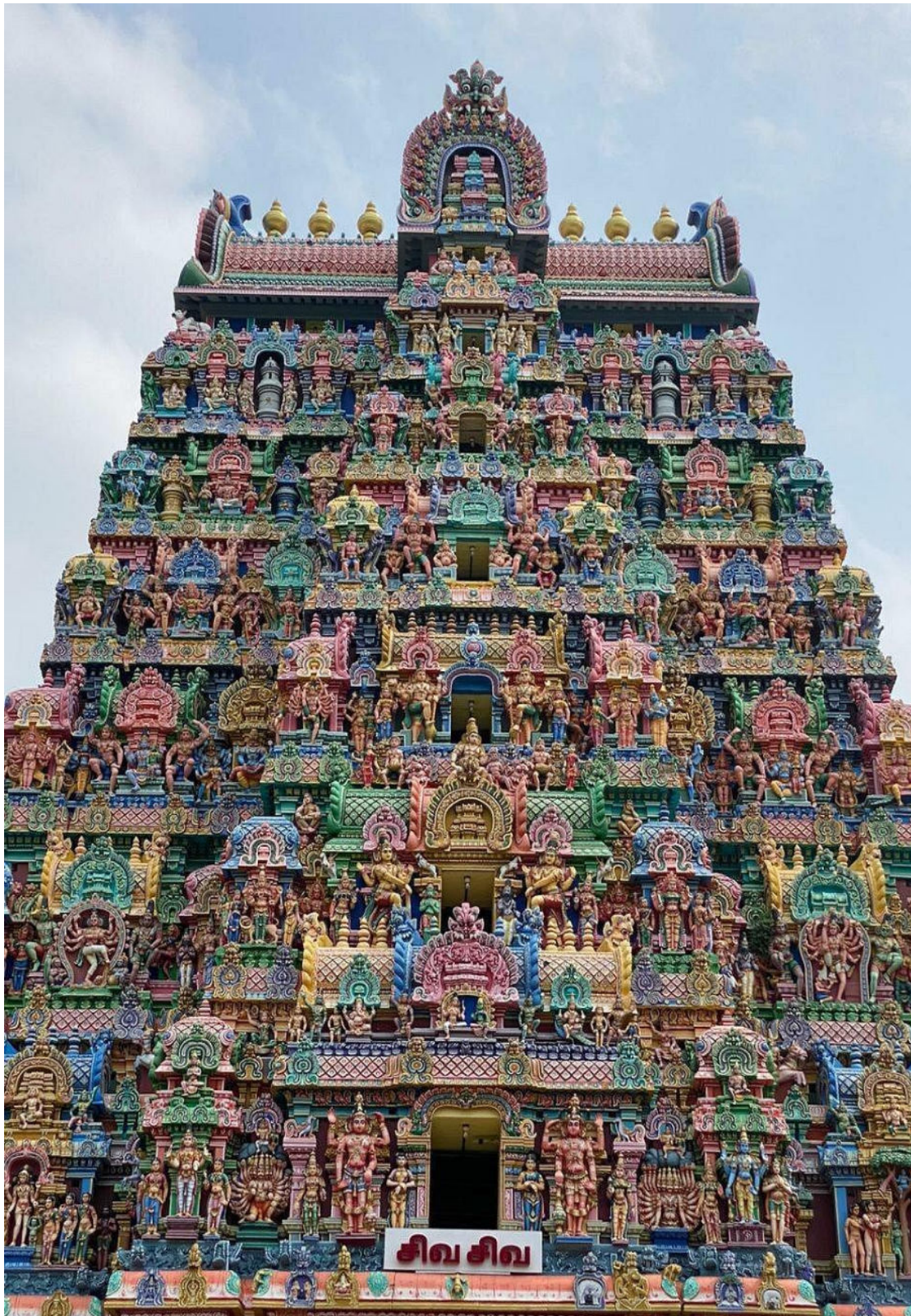


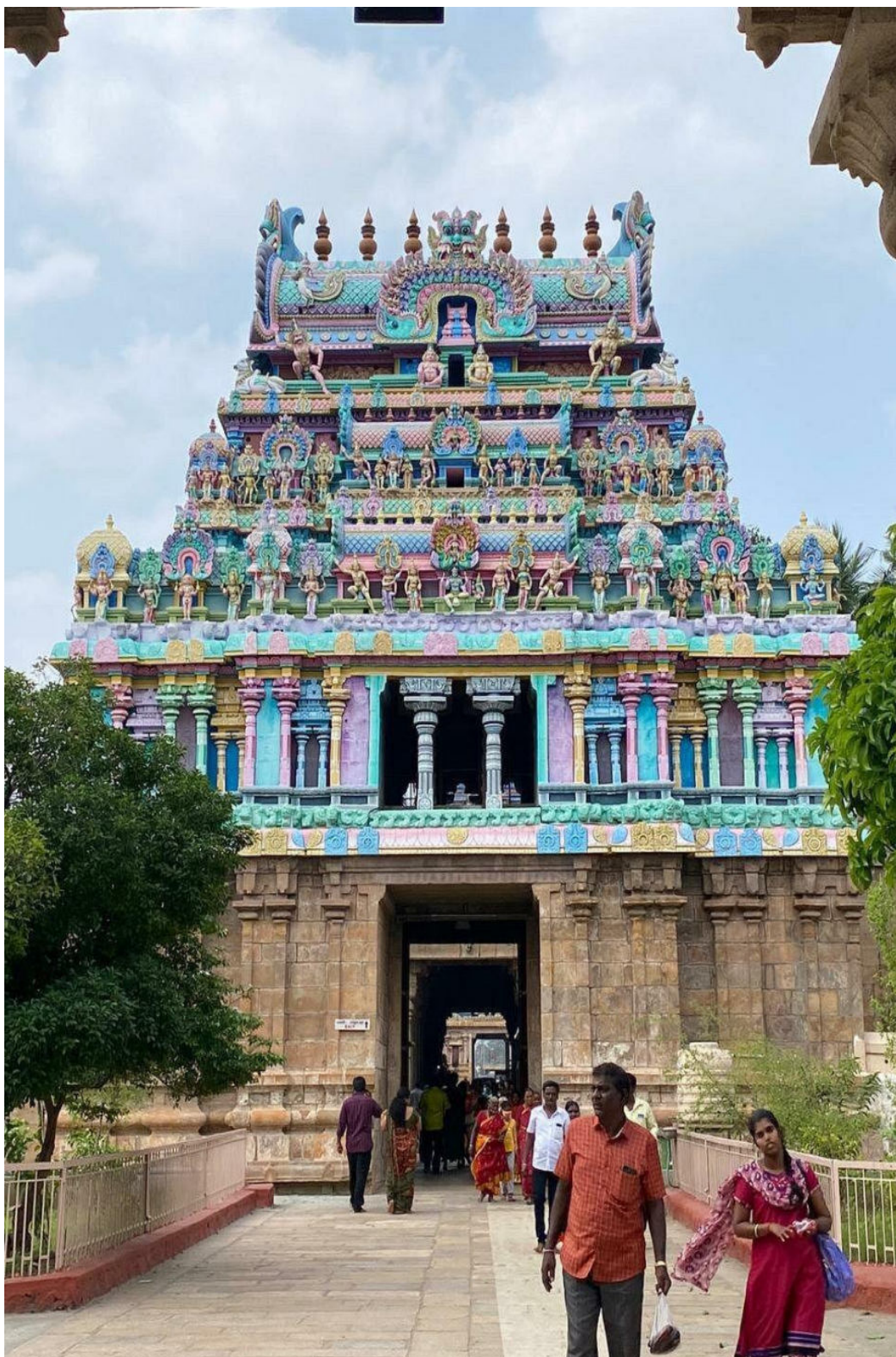


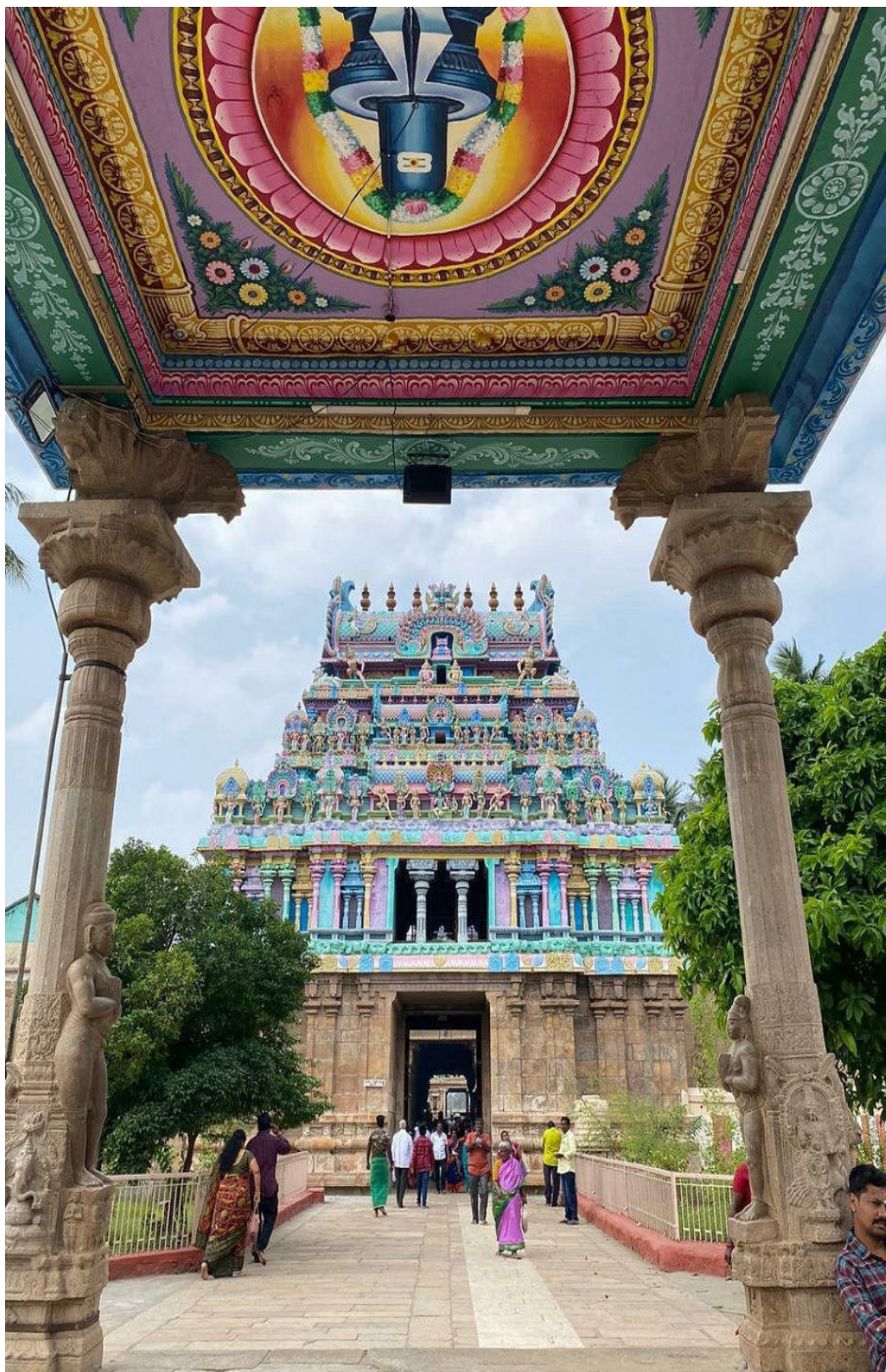




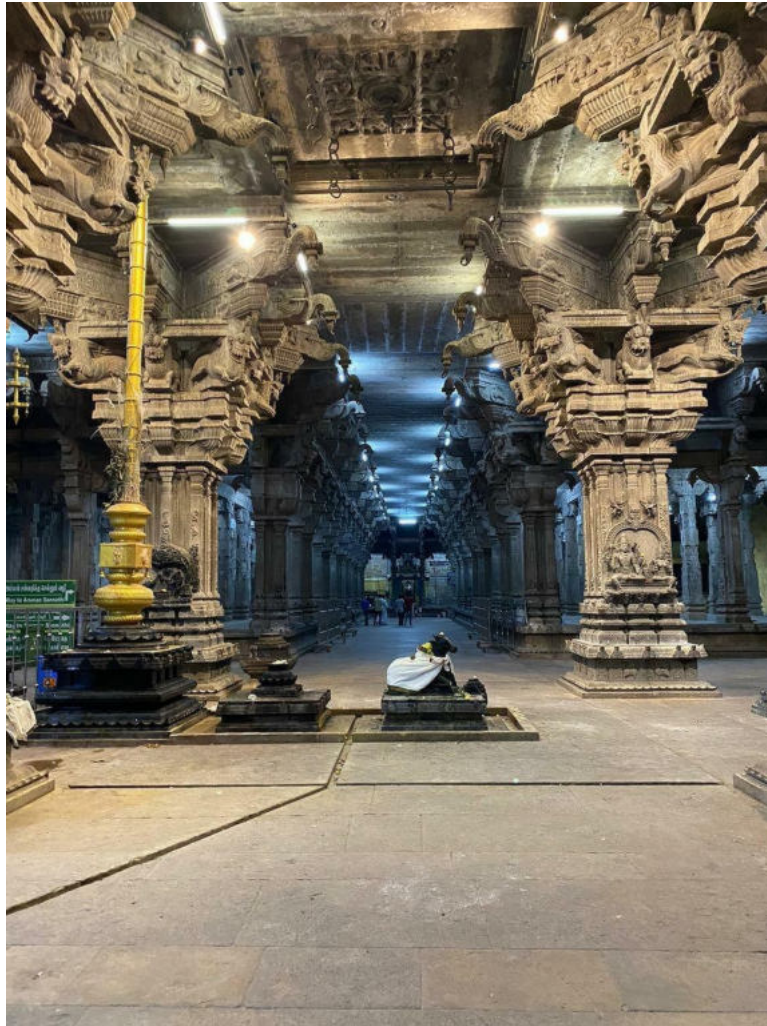












Videos:

Jambukeswarar Temple- a short tour: <https://youtu.be/JX12hQGEEqI>

Jambukeswarar temple: <https://youtu.be/m7bWVNrLyh4>

Jambukeswarar Temple-history and travel: <https://youtu.be/vQ2tgaRphzY>

Temple for war: <https://youtu.be/zqw7MyklHj8>

Thiruvanaikovil temple: <https://youtu.be/CixcriLu4FA>

Jambukeswarar Temple: <https://youtu.be/QOeWZQtpMLA>

Jambukeswarar Akilandeswari temple: <https://youtu.be/8NOglg0pi9E>

Jambukeswarar Temple: <https://youtu.be/TJrVMR5PguM>

Jambukeswarar: 10 Interesting facts: <https://youtu.be/Q-HhsSzwFNs>

Sembakkam Jambukeswarar: <https://youtu.be/WjotRKXa5Vw>

Jambukeswarar Temple- 505 gold coins removed from earth in digging:
<https://youtu.be/Qp-lQg8FwOk>

Thiruvanaikaval temple: <https://youtu.be/plER3HFStsl>

Jambukeswarar Temple: <https://youtu.be/wsX4ANxpWKc>

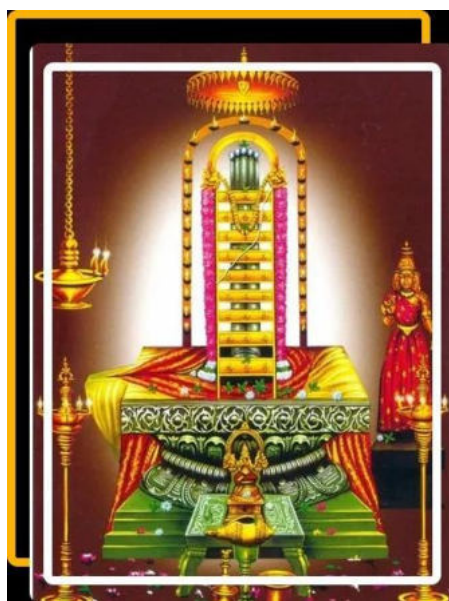
Jambukeswarar Temple: <https://youtu.be/0kPBqNdP15w>

Jambukeswarar Temple: <https://youtu.be/jiybbfCKgr4>

Panchabhoota Sthalams-
Five Shiva temples representing five elements of Nature

3. Sri Kalahasteeswara temple, Srikalahasti, Chittor, A. P.

Compiled by: M. Thirumaleshwar
Email: tmuliya@rediffmail.com



Ref: Wikipedia

Srialahasti Temple is located in the town of Srialahasti, in the state of Andhra Pradesh, India. It is one of the most famous Shiva temples in South India, and is said to be the site where Kannappa was ready to offer both his eyes to cover blood flowing from the Siva linga before the Siva stopped him and granted him moksha.

Srialahasti temple, situated 36 km away from Tirupati is famous for its Vayu linga, one of the Panchabhoota Sthalams, representing wind. The temple is also regarded as Rahu-Ketu kshetra and Dakshina Kailasam. The inner temple was constructed around 5th century and the outer temple was constructed in the 11th century by the Rajendra Chola I, later Chola kings and the Vijayanagara kings. Shiva in his aspect as Vayu is worshiped as Kalahasteswara.

Legend

During the early days of creation, Vayu performed penance for thousands of years to "Karpooora lingam" (Karpooram means camphor). Pleased with his penance, Shiva manifested before him and said, " O Vayu Deva! Though you are dynamic in nature, you stayed here without movement and did penance for me. I'm pleased with your devotion. I shall grant you three boons". Vayu said, "Swami! I want to be present everywhere in this world. I want to be an integral part of every Jiva who is none other than the manifestation of Paramatma. I want to name this Karpooora Linga, which represents you, after me. Samba Siva said," Your are qualified for these three boons. As per your wish, you will be spread throughout this world. Without you there will be no life. This linga of mine will forever be known all over through your name, and all Suras, Asuras, Garuda, Gaandharvas, Kinneras, kimpurushas, Siddhas, Saadhvis, humans and others will worship this Lingam". Shiva disappeared after granting these boons. Thereafter, this Karpooora Vayu Lingam is worshipped by all Lokas (worlds).[3]

There are several other legends connected to the glory of the temple. Prominent among them is of Parvati who was cursed by Shiva to discard her heavenly body and assume the human form. To get rid of the above curse Parvati did a long penance here. Pleased with her deep devotion Shiva again recreated her body – a hundred times better than her previous heavenly body and initiated various mantras including the Panchakshari. Consequent to this, Parvati gained fame and came to be known as Shiva-Gnanam Gnana Prasunamba or Gnana Prasunambika Devi.

Cursed to become a ghost, Ghanakala prayed at Srialahasti for 15 years and after chanting the Bhairava Mantra many times Shiva restored her original form. Mayura, Chandra and Devendra were also freed from their curses after taking bath in the river Swarnamukhi and praying at Srialahasti. To Bhakta Markandeya, Shiva appeared in Srialahasti and preached that a Guru alone could make esoteric teachings and, therefore he is Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswara.

As per another legend, Vayu and Adishesha had a dispute to find out who is superior, to prove the superiority Adishesha encircled the Kailasam, Vayu tried to remove this encircle by

creating Twister. Because of the twister, 8 parts from kailasam fell into 8 different places which are Trincomalee, Srikalahasti, Thiruchiramalai, Thiruenkoimalai, Rajathagiri, Neerthagiri, Ratnagiri, and Suwethagiri Thirupangeeli.[4]

History

Around the 11th century, the Chola king Rajendra Chola I king renovated the temple and constructed the main structure.[5] The temple received contributions from various ruling dynasties like Chola Dynasty and Vijayanagar Empire. The hundred pillared hall with intricate carvings was commissioned during the regime of Krishnadeva Raya during 1516 AD.[6]

The presiding deity of the temple Gnana Prasunambika Devi was born in Vellathurar Gotra of Senguntha Kaikolar. Customary for the bride to bring home the dowry and submit it by these Vellathurar peoples at the Shiva Parvati wedding held here.[7][8]

Architecture

The temple was built by Rajendra Chola I, The 120 feet (37 m) high main gopuram and the 100 pillar mandapam were constructed by Krishnadevaraya, the Vijayanagara king in 1516. The presiding image of Shiva in the form of Linga is made of white stone in a shape resembling trunk of elephant. The temple faces south, while the sanctum faces west. The temple is located on the foothills of a hill, while there is also a belief that the temple was carved out of a monolithic hill. There is a rock cut shrine of Vinayaka, 9 ft (2.7 m) below the ground level. Vallaba Ganapathi, Mahalakshmi-Ganpathi and Sahasra Lingeswara are some of the rare images found in the temple. There is a large shrine of Jnanaprasanammba, the consort of Kalahatisvara. There are smaller shrines in the temple for Kasi Viswanatha, Annapurna, Suryanarayana, Sadyoganapathi and Subramanya. There are two large halls namely Sadyogi Mandapa and Jalkoti Mandapa. There are two water bodies associated with the namely, Surya Pushkarani and Chandra Pushkarani.[6]

Religious importance

The temple is revered as one of the Pancha Bhoota Stalam where the presiding deity is worshipped as Vayu linga (air). This temple is considered "Kashi of the South".[9] Saivaites of the first century sang about this temple. This is the only temple in India which remains open during Solar and lunar eclipses, while, all other temples are closed.[10] This temple is famous for Rahu-Kethu pooja. It is believed that performing this pooja will ward the people from astrological effects of Rahu and Kethu.[10] As per Hindu legend, Kalahatiswara was worshipped at this place by Brahma during all four Yugas. Arjuna, the Pandava prince during Mahabharata is believed to have worshipped the presiding deity. The legend of Kannappa, who was a hunter and turned into an ardent devotee of Shiva accidentally, is associated with the temple. The temple also finds mention in the works of Nakeerar and the Nalvars, namely, Appar, Sundarar, Sambandar and Manickavasagar in the canonical works of Tirumura.[6] As the temple is revered in Tevaram, it is classified as Paadal Petra Sthalam, one of the 275 temples that find mention in the Saiva canon.[11]

Inspired by meditation, Lord Shiva appeared to him and gave him the boon he asked for. No longer is this lingam bearing your name and saying. That ages will pass and Kalakasti is gaining popularity as a heavenly place in the Panchaputra sites.

This vayu lingam was worshiped by Mother Parvati. Sand Base Kanchipuram Ekampareswarar Water Thiruvanaikaval fire Like Thiruvannamalai. Goddess Parvathi meditated on Lord Shiva in this temple. The history of the temple is also mentioned here.

Culture



The shrine of Amman located parallel to the Shiva shrine

The temple follows Saivite tradition.[citation needed] Maha Shivaratri is the most important festival when lakhs of devotees offer prayers to seek the blessings of the Lord. Mahasivaratri Brahmotsavams are celebrated in par with Maha Shivaratri for 13 days during which the Utsava murtis of Siva and Parvati will be taken on Vahanams in a procession around the temple streets.[12]

Temple tower collapse and Reconstruction

The temple in reconstruction, view from Kannappa Hill near the ...river (2016)

The 15 century iconic Rajagopuram of Srikalahasti Temple, built by Sri Krishnadevaraya, collapsed on 26 May 2010.[13][14] As per Archaeology Department, the temple tower stood on a foundation that had a depth of only one-and-a-half feet and had a thin crack 25 years before it collapsed which expanded as years passed by.[15][16]

The Rajagopuram is reconstructed again in its original form at the same location with a budget of 45 crores and is consecrated on 18, January, 2017.[13]

Ref: holidify.com

Srikalahasti Temple, Chittoor -- Overview

Situated in Chittoor, Srikalahasti Temple is popular among devotees who visit the temple along with the highly revered Tirupati Temple, which is just 36 km away. Dedicated to Lord Shiva, Kalahasti temple has immense religious importance for Hindus and was constructed in the year 1516 by Krishnadevaraya, a king of the Vijayanagara empire.

The elaborate structure of the Srikalahasti temple complex is a breathtaking view right from the entrance. It has intricate carvings of numerous mythological illustrations that one can explore in the divine surroundings. This magnificent temple is often referred to as the Kailasa and Kashi of the south. The temple represents one of the five elements (Pancha Bhoota) - Air or Vayu.

The place has an abundance of vibrant, divine aura and has the potential to draw visitors with its ornate shrines and mesmerising beauty. Srikalahasti is an excellent example of South Indian temple architecture where highly ornamented gopurams with expansive intricately carved interiors unfold the magnificent treasures of the Dravidian style of architecture.

Legends of Srikalahasti Temple

1.The most famous legend states that during the initial phases of the creation of the world, Lord Vayu performed penance to please Karpooora Lingam for thousands of years. Lord Shiva, delighted with Lord Vayu's devotion, granted him three boons. Lord Vayu thus asked for him to grant him worldwide presence, to be an essential part of every living being on the planet and to be given the permission to rename the Karpooora Ligam as Samba Siva. These three requests were granted by Lord Shiva, and Vayu (pranvayu or air) has ever since been an integral part of life on earth and the lingam was worshipped as Samba Siva or the Karpooora Vayu Lingam.

2.Another legend states that Goddess Parvati was once cursed by Lord Shiva and was made to abandon her divine avatar and take the form of an ordinary human. Goddess Parvati performed penance for several years at Srikalahasti to liberate herself from the curse. Lord Shiva was immensely pleased with her devotion and dedication, and he recreated Parvati in a heavenly avatar which is known as Gnana Prasunambika Devi or Shiva-Gnanam Gnana Prasunamba.

3.According to another legend, Kannappa who was one of the 63 Saivite Saints who devoted all their lives to Lord Shiva. Kannappa willingly wanted to offer his eyes to cover the blood flowing from Lord Shiva's lingam. When Lord Shiva got to know about this, he stopped the saint and granted his release from the endless cycle of birth and death. Some say Ghanakala was cursed to take the form of a ghostly spirit. He offered his prayers to Srikalahasti for 15 years and chanted the Bhairava Mantra to please Lord Shiva. When Lord Shiva was pleased with Ghanakala's devotion, he restored her to her previous form.

History of Srikalahasti Temple

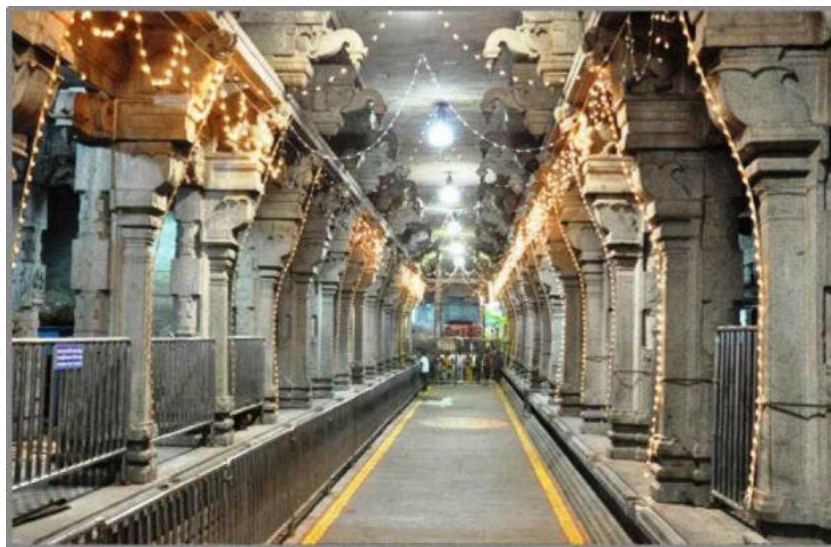
The name Srikalahasti was derived from a myth that stated that a Spider (Sri), a Snake (Kala) and an Elephant (Hasti) worshipped Lord Shiva in the town to attain Moksha. The core of this mythology was considered as a sign by many religious believers and hence, in the 5th Century during the Pallava period, the Srikalahasti Temple was built.

Further expansion of the temple complex, renovations and some latest structures were built during the reign of the Chola Kingdom during the 11th Century and Vijayanagara Dynasty during the 16th Century. The works of a Tamil Poet, Nakkeerar, have references to the temple proving its existence during the Tamil Sangam Dynasty. Nakkeerar and another famous Telugu Poet, Dhoorjati, wrote numerous stanzas in praise of Srikalahasteeswara.



Architecture of Srikalahasti Temple

The Srikalahasti Temple is a beautiful illustration of the Dravidian Style of architecture that was built during the Pallava period in the 5th Century. The temple complex is located at the base of a hill. Some even believe it is a monolithic structure. The grand temple complex has its entrance facing the south, while the main shrine faces the west. The white stone Shiva Lingam inside this shrine resembles the shape of an elephant's trunk. The main gopuram of the temple is about 120 feet high.



The mandap in the temple complex has 100 intricately carved pillars that were built during the reign of a Vijayanagara King, Krishnadevraya, in 1516. The shrine of Lord Ganesh in the complex is a 9 feet tall rock-cut shrine. It also houses shrines for Jnanaprasanammba, Kasi Viswanatha, Suryanarayan, Subramanya, Annapurna and Sadyoganapathi that are adorned with images of Ganapati, Mahalakshmi Ganapathi, Vallabha Ganapati and Sahasra Lingeswara. The temple area also has two more mandaps, the Sadyogi Mandap, the Jalkoti Mandap and two water bodies Chandra Pushkarani and Surya Pushkarani.

Srikalahasti Temple Pooja Timings and Cost

Temple Abhishekam - 6:00 AM, 7:00 AM, 10:00 AM and 5:00 PM, Monday to Sunday - INR 600.

Subhrata Seva - INR 50

Archana - INR 25

Gomatha Pooja - INR 50

Sahasranamarchana - INR 200

Trisathi Archana - INR 125

Rahu Ketu Pooja - 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM, Monday to Sunday - INR 500

Kaal Sarpa Nirvana Pooja - 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM, Monday to Sunday - INR 750

Aseervachana Rahu Ketu Kaal Sarpa Nirvana Pooja - 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM - INR 1500

Special Aseervachana Rahu Ketu Kaal Sarpa Nirvana Pooja - 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM - INR 2500

Tips For Visiting Srikalahasti Temple

1. Do not purchase pooja materials from the stalls outside the temple. You are given all the materials that are needed for the pooja Along with INR 1000 ticket. This ticket also entitles you to an exclusive darshan (glimpse) and archana (special pooja) of the main deities within the temple.
2. Don't forget to see the Pathala Ganapathi underground temple located in the temple complex.
3. Take care if you are in the main sanctum of the temple where the deity is as it is dark and full of roaches. Priests demand money for every statue or thing they show.
4. Certain Dosha Poojas could have a dress code; please check at the ticket counter in advance. These Poojas are also instructed in Tamil, Telugu and English.
5. For darshan, ensure you wear conservative clothing.

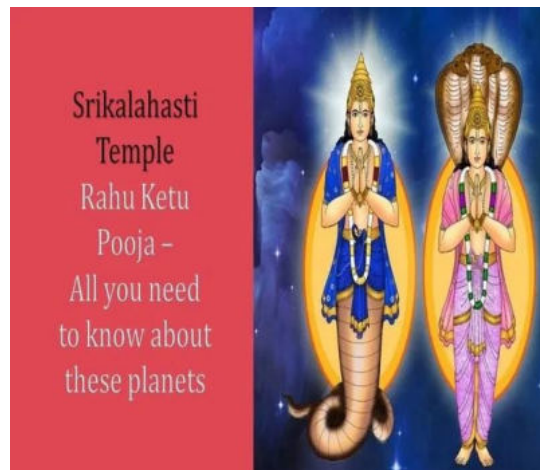
Photos:







Ref: srikalahasthitemple.com



Rahu Ketu Pooja – According to Hindu Astrology, Rahu and Ketu indicate the two points of the crossing point of the ways of the Sun and the Moon. They move around the divine circle. The way that obscurations happen when Sun and Moon are at one of these focuses offers the fantasy of gulping of the Sun.

Rahu is one of the nine well known astronomical bodies in Indian texts. Rahu is a shadow entity, unlike the other eight bodies. It is the one that causes eclipses and is also believed to be the king of meteors. Rahu represents the ascension of the moon in its precessional orbit around the earth.

According to some accounts in Hindu mythology, Ketu belongs to Jaimini Gotra. Whereas Rahu is from Paiteenasa Gotra. Thus both are totally different entities having distinct characteristics but are two parts of a common body. Ketu is generally called as a “shadow” planet. It is believed that it has a tremendous impact on human lives and the whole creation as well.

The Rahu is of female and Ketu is of neutral. Rahu is the significator of otherworldly information and Ketu is the karaka or significator of Moksha or the last freedom, as relationship significator. Rahu oversees maternal grandparents and Ketu indicates fatherly grandparents.

ABOUT TEMPLE

This temple itself is a great architectural piece of art. Spend some time exploring the temple. You can see that the inside pillars are fresh as they were hundreds of years back because they were hidden from degradation by nature.

Please plan your trip in such a way that you can spend some time exploring the physical and spiritual beauty of the temple because the inner temple was constructed around 5th century and the outer temple was constructed in the 12th Century by the Chola kings and the Vijayanagara kings. Vayu is incarnated as Lord Shiva and worshiped as Kalahasteswara.

In the outer temple, as soon as you enter the temple gates (after the shops) on your left you will see the old idol of SriGnanaprasunambika Devi (the original one) which was placed outside due to some reasons.....Still lot of people pray to it....

The main linga remains untouched by human hands, even the priests do not touch it. Abhishek (bathing) is done by pouring a mixture of water, milk, camphor and panchamrita. Sandal paste, flowers and the sacred thread are offered to the utsava-murti, and not the main linga. It has an enormous, ancient gopuram over the main gate, which is 36.5 meters (120 feet) high and the entire temple is carved.

PATHALA GANAPATHI:



By the way, do not forget to see the Pathala Ganapathi who is associated with the old Sivalingam beneath the temple. You cannot see the Old SivaLingam (related to the old Story of SriKalaHasti) beneath the temple but you can imagine it (and the real story) when you see the Lord Ganapathi. Patala Ganapati is a small underground temple located in the temple complex. Pilgrims should make it a point to visit this interesting place. One has to bow down carefully to worship this Ganapati 20 feet below on a very narrow staircase.

ANOTHER ONE IS KANAPPA:



At Sri Kalahasti, Lord Shiva tested the unshakable devotion of Kanna (Later became Bhaktha Kannappa) before the sages gathered at SriKalahasti. With his divine power, Lord

Shiva created a tremor and the roof tops of the temple began to fall. All the sages ran away from the scene except Kannappa who covered the linga with his body to prevent it from any damage.

In another incident, Kannappa plucked out one of his eyes and placed in the eye of Linga which was oozing with blood and tears. When the tears and the blood were still trickling from another eye, Kannappa decided to remove his second eye and placed one of his feet on the spot of the right eye of the Shiva Linga. Before he could pull out his second eye with the arrow, Lord Shiva appeared and restored his eye while granting him a boon to occupy a place close to him.

According to Swami Sivananda's book, *Sixty-Three Nayanar Saints*, some Saivite traditions believe that Kannappa was the reincarnation of Arjuna. Arjuna, worshipped Siva for seeking the Pasupatha Astra and failed to recognize Him in the form of a hunter. Thus, according to this tradition, Arjuna had to be born as a hunter and adore the Lord before attaining final liberation.

Festivals:

Maha Shivaratri which occurs in the Tamil month of Maasi (Feb 15 through March 15) is one of the greatest festival seasons here, and the celebrations are marked by processions of the deities. The fifth day of the festival in the month of Maasi coincides with the Maha Shivaratri.

The Sivarathri Brahmotsavam is a 12-day festival of great importance that attracts lakhs of people from various parts of our country. Mahasivarathri, Nandi Seva, Lingodbhavam, Rathotsavam, Teppotsavam & Sri Swami-Ammavarla Kalyanotsavam are the important aspects of this festival.

HISTORY OF TEMPLE

According to ancient Tamil sources Sri Kalahasti has been known as the 'Kailas of the South' for slightly more than two thousand years and the small river on whose banks it sits, the 'Ganges of the South.' Kailas is perhaps India's most revered spiritual symbol. It is the abode of Shiva, from whose head, according to legend, the Ganges is said to flow. Shiva, 'that which is auspicious at all places, times and in all circumstances' is a symbol of the Self and the Ganges flowing from his head represents the spiritualized or awakened mind. A mind sourced in Spirit is a river of immeasurable power and life-giving goodness.

The claim that Kalahasti is the 'Kailas of the South' simply means that the small hill near the temple is to be taken as the spiritual equivalent of the Himalayan Kailas. Likewise, the small river flowing in a northerly direction beside the temple is to be taken as the mighty Ganges. Even the cardinal directions have assumed symbolic significance in Pauranic culture. Obviously context should be taken into account when divining the meaning of a symbol, but north, for example, is said to be the abode of the Self because from the immortal 'northern' position the Self looks out on the 'southern' world of time and death. The idiom to "head south" means to go downhill, to decay. The God Dakshinamurthy whose name means 'the one facing south' and whose idol (murthy) is installed in the Kalahasti Temple, sits in the

North and faces south. East often represents the dawning of wisdom, the sun being another common Self symbol. The symbolic use of direction culminates in the idea of building temples at the point on a river where its meandering points it back to its source. The holiest city in India, Benaras, is built on a stretch of the Ganges that flows northward, the idea being that when the mind turns back toward its source, the God/Self, it realizes its innate divinity. So, the small river on whose banks the Kalahasthi temple is situated is meant to remind us of the Ganges and the wealth of spiritual associations it conjures.

The Vedas posit four ends for which human beings strive in their search for happiness: pleasure (kama), security or wealth (artha), duty (dharma) and freedom (moksha). In the temple at Kalahasti these four universal motivations, which may take any worldly form, are, according to temple literature, converted into spiritual impulses. They are represented by four deities facing in the four cardinal directions. Shiva in the form of Dakshinamoorthy represents desire, in this case the desire for liberation, although he more commonly is said to represent the feeling of wealth (dakshina) that comes when you know who you really are. At Kalahasti the Goddess Gnanaprasoonamba (the giver of knowledge or the mother of all knowledge) represents the 'wealth' i.e. freedom from limitation conferred by Self knowledge. The deity Kalahastishwara (the lord of Kalahasti) faces west and symbolizes liberation. Liberation, the death of ego upon the rediscovery of the Self, is the final stage of life just as setting is the sun's last act before it disappears over the horizon.

The Tamil Cholas and the Vijayanagara Rulers have made several endowments to this temple. Adi Sankara is said to have visited this temple and offered worship here. There are Chola inscriptions in this temple which date back to the 10th century CE. The Telugu poem 'Sri Kalahasti Satakam' explains the traditions associated with this temple. Muthuswamy Deekshitar, one of the foremost composers in the Karnatic Music Tradition has sung the glory of this temple in his kriti 'Sree Kaalahasteesa'.

GAALI GOPURAM:



Sri Krishnadevaraya built a huge gopuram in 1516, a few feet away from the entrance to the temple. The entrance to the temple is crowned with a smaller tower. There is an underground Ganapati shrine in the outer prakaram, while in the innermost prakaram are the shrines of Shiva and Parvati. This ancient gopuram over the main gate, which is 36.5 meters (120 feet) high and the entire temple is carved.



The vast west facing Kalahastiswara temple is built adjoining a hill, and on the banks of the river Swarnamukhi. At some points, the hill serves as the wall of the temple. The temple prakarams follow the contour of the adjoining hill and hence the temple plan is rather irregular. North of the temple is the Durgambika hill, south is the Kannappar hill and east is the Kumaraswamy hill.

ARCHITECTURE:



The present structure of the temple is a foundation of the Cholas of the 10th century, as testified by inscriptions; improvements and additions were made during the subsequent years of the Chola rulers of Tamilnadu and the Vijayanagar emperors.

SriKalahasti got its name because in days of yore a spider (sri), serpent (kala) and elephant (hasti) elephant worshipped Shiva with great devotion. A spider lived in the inner sanctum and worshipped the Lord by weaving elaborate temples and images of Shiva. One day a breeze came up and caused the altar fire to destroy the spider's offerings. It became angry and was about to gulp down the flame, (realize the Self) endangering its (ego's) life. Appreciative of its devotion, Shiva appeared and granted the spider a boon. The spider requested moksha, release from the cycle of births and deaths. Accordingly it became one with Shiva, the Self.



A cobra worshipped Lord Shiva by offering rare gems, pearls and rubies that it brought from Nagaland, a mythical place where Nagas (serpents) dwell. Serpents are one of India's most visible symbols of the spiritual power of the Self. The spiritual power of the Self, called Kundalini, the latent electricity of Consciousness, is hidden in the dark recesses of the unconscious like a snake hidden deep within the earth. After the snake had worshipped, an elephant, fresh from its purifying bath in the nearby river, came to worship. In preparation it sprayed the altar with water from its trunk, scattering the gems. It then proceeded to decorate the altar with leaves from a holy tree. When the cobra returned it was angered to see its offerings disrespected and replaced by mere leaves. So it replaced the leaves with gems. This charade repeated itself every day until the cobra became fed up and decided to punish whomever was destroying its offerings. When the elephant returned to worship with its leaves the cobra slithered up its trunk and injected its venom. In agony the elephant dashed its head on the stone altar in an attempt to kill the snake. The snake fell out of the trunk and died from its wounds and the elephant succumbed to the poison. Understanding that both had sacrificed their lives for the sake of their love of the Lord, Shiva resurrected them, gave them liberation and took them into his own body. At the foot of the linga one can see a spider, two elephant tusks and a five-headed (the five elements) serpent to remind the devotee of these acts of supreme devotion.

CONTACT INFO

Email us: info@srikalahasthitemple.com

Sevas and Timings

Rituals: Daily rituals in Temple :

S.No	Seva	Timing
1	Suprabatham	5-30 AM
2	Sarvadarshanam	6-00 AM
3	Pradhama Kala Abhishekam	7-30 AM
4	Dwthiya Kala Abhishekam	9-00 AM
5	Ucchi kala Abhishekam	10-30 AM
6	Rudhra Homam	11-00 AM
7	Chandhi Homam	11-00 AM
8	Nityothesavam	11-00 AM
9	Nithya Kalyanam	11-30 AM
10	Prodhosha Kala Abhishekam	5-30 PM
11	Nirajana Manthra Pushpam	7-00 PM
12	Ekantha Seva	9-00 PM
13	Temple Closing time	9-00 PM (every day) 9-30 PM (on Saturday to Monday)

Sevas:- The following Arjitha Sevas and Saswatha Sevas are performed in the Temple.

S.No	Name of Seva	Rate (Rupees)	Saswatha Seva Fund Amount (Rupees)
1	Free Darshanam	-	-
2	Special Entrance	50-00	-
3	Astothra Archana	25-00	300-00
4	Sahasranamarchana	200-00	2400-00
5	Thrisathri Archana	125-00	1350-00
6	Milk Abhishekam (Two Liters) of Milk is to be brought by devotees	100-00	1200-00
7	Patchakarpurabhishekam	100-00	1200-00
8	Kasi Gangabhishekam	25-00	-
9	Rudrabhishekam to Sri Swamy and Ammavaru	600-00	6000-00
10	Nitya dittha Abhshekam	100-00	1000-00
11	Sri Saneeswara Swamy bhishekam	150-00	1500-00
12	Sri Ammavari Vunjali Seva (on Friday only)	58-00	600-00
13	Marriage Fee(Vivaha Katnam) (Devotees)	200-00	-
14	Panchamurthabhishekam	300-00	3600-00
15	Akhanda Deeparadhana Katnam	100-00	550-00
16	Nityaotsavam (Morning)	58-00	1500-00
17	Pradosha Nandi Seva	120-00	1300-00
18	Ekantha Seva	100-00	1050-00
19	Vahana Puja (Heavy) (Light)	100-00 20-00	
20	Suprabhatha Seva (per Head)	50-00	225-00
21	Thaliga Katnam	10-00	
22	Sarpadosha (Rahu – Keethu) Poja (Including all necessities)	300-00	
23	Spl. Rahu – Kethu Pooja	750-00	
24	Spl. Ashirwadam – Rahu- Keethu Pooja	1500-00	
25	Nitya Kalyanam	501-00	5500-00
26	Spl. Ashirwada Darshan	500-00	
27	Rudra Homam	1116-00	
28	Chandiyagam	1116-00	
29	Mahanyasa Purvaka Rudhrabishekam (Every Monday 4pm & Arudra Ekadasi only)		
30	Gopuja	50-00	

Note:-The above Saswatha Poojas will be performed once in every year on the day the devotee intended.

VRATHAMS :- SPECIAL POOJAS

The following types of special poojas have been introduced to increase the income of the Devasthanam :

- 1) Chandi Homam
- 2) Rudra Homam
- 3) Special Rahu_Kethu Sarpa Dosha Nivarana Poojas
- 4) Special Ashirwada Darshan

- 1) Chandi Homam Fee Rs.1,116/- timings : 10-30 AM all pooja materials will be given by the Devasthanam.
- 2) Rudra Homam Fee Rs.1,116/- Timings : 10-30 AM all Pooja materials will be given by the Devasthanam.
- 3) Rahu Kethu Sarpa Dosha Nivarana Pooja : Fee Rs.300/-, 750/-, 1500/-
Timings : 6-30 AM to 8-30 PM all Pooja materials will be given by the Devasthanam.
- 4) Special Ashirwada Darshan : Fee Rs.500-00, Timings : 6-00 AM to 9-00PM.

For the above poojas, the devotees will be honoured with Shesha Vasthram, Jacket piece, Five Laddus, Five Vadas and small Lamination Photo of Srikalahstheeswaraswamivaru and Sri Gnana Prasunambha Ammavaru

Rudrabhishekam:

Daily four times, Rudrabhishekam is performed to the Lord and the Goddess with Rudraparayanam. Devotees can participate in this abhishekam on payment of Rs. 600/-. Bahumanam Devotees will be presented with Seshavastra of the Lord and the Goddess besides Laddus, Vada, Pulihora etc. They will also be given laminated photos of the Lord and the Goddess.

Palabhishekam:

This is another abhishekam offered to the Lord and the Goddess. Devotees can participate in this abhishekam on payment of Rs. 100 (two liters of milk should be brought by the devotees). They will be given tirtha prasada.

Panchamritabhishekam:

This is an important abhishekam offered to the Lord and His consort. Devotees can take part in this abhishekam on payment of Rs. 300. Bahumanam Pulihora, panchamritam, tirtha prasadam. Pacchakarpurambhishekam: This abhishekam is yet another important abhishekam performed in the temple. Pacchakarpurabhishekam is offered only to the Lord who is a self-manifest. Devotees can pay Rs. 100 and participate in this abhishekam.

Sahasranamarchana:

This is a highly sacred seva. Devotees can perform Sahasranamarchana to the Lord and the Goddess on payment of Rs. 200/-. Bahumanam: Vada, payasam, pulihora.

Saneeswara Swamy Abhishekam:

This abhishekam is offered to Lord Saniswara in the temple of Sri Kalahasteeswara - Sri Gnana Prasunambika temple. Devotees can take part in the abhishekam on payment of Rs. 150/-.

Rahu-Ketu sarpadosha nivarana puja:

Rahu Ketu Sarpadosha Nivarana puja is a highly efficacious puja conducted in the temple of Sri Kalahasteswara, reputed as Rahu-Ketu kshetra. Those who are affected by Rahu-Ketu doshas, Grahadoshas, sarva doshas, those who are unmarried, who are childless and people who are affected with long-standing problems perform this unique puja to remove such doshas and get desired result. Thousands of devotees, who received good results after performing this puja, come from all corners of India and abroad and continue to fulfil their vows again and again. This pooja will be performed everyday from morning 6.30AM to evening 8.30PM. All Pooja materials will be given by the Devasthanam. Fee Rs.300/-, 750/-, 1500/-(only 2 persons(children exempted))

Nitya Kalyanotsavam:

Every day Nitya Kalyana seva is offered to Sri SivaParvati along with abhishekam to the Lord on payment of Rs. 501/-. Those who make permanent endowment of Rs. 5000/-for Nitya Kalyanotsavam can perform it every year on any day they desire (except during 12 days of Sivaratri Brahmotsavam). They will be given Sri Swamivari prasadam, Seshavastram, laminated photo of the Lord and Goddess and special asirvachanas.

Unjal Seva:

Unjal seva is a special seva offered to the Lord and the Goddess on every Pournami (full moon) day. The seva is conducted in the four-pillar mantapam in the Achutaraya mantapam (Kata Mantapam) within the temple precincts on an elegantly decorated unjal (swing). To perform this seva in which the Lord and the Goddess are adorned with precious ornaments for seven weeks, the devotees may make an endowment of Rs. 5,000. Unjal seva is an ideal seva where the devotees can offer service to the Lord and the Goddess with their own hands.

Nandi Seva:

Nandi seva is another grand seva performed in Sri Kalahasteswaraswamy temple. Devotees who pay a fee of Rs. 6,500/- can perform this seva on any day, they desire. Abhishekam will be done in their name besides giving tirtha and annaprasadas. The Divine Couple is taken out on specially decorated Silver Nandi and Simha Vahanam in procession at night.

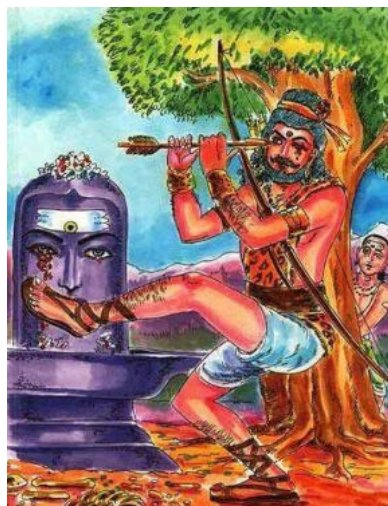
Nityannadana Scheme:

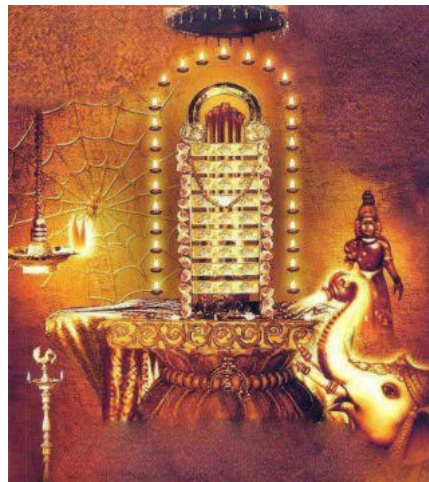
There is no gift superior to Annadanam (donating food). To provide food to the poor and hungry is a noble tradition followed by us since the Vedic times. 'Annadata Sukhibhava' say the ancients. One who performs this sacred service receives several crores of merits.

Sri Gnanaprasunambika devi Nityannadana scheme was set up in Sri Kalahasteswara swami temple to provide free and hygienic meals to the pilgrims visiting the temple. Not less than 200 pilgrims are provided with free meals under the scheme every day.

Annadanam is offered on the interest accrued on the endowment made by the devotees in their name on any day they prefer. Devotees can send any amount not less than Rs. 1,116/-. Every year on a day Annadanam is performed in the name of the donor on the interest accrued on the endowment.

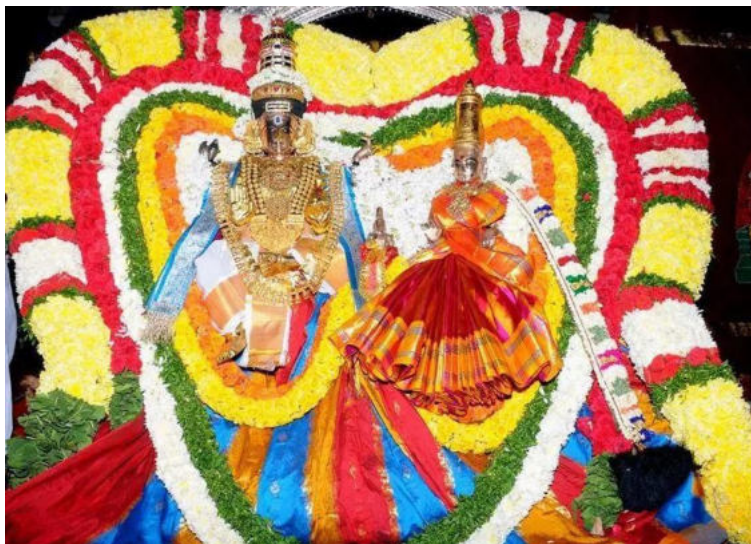
Gallery:



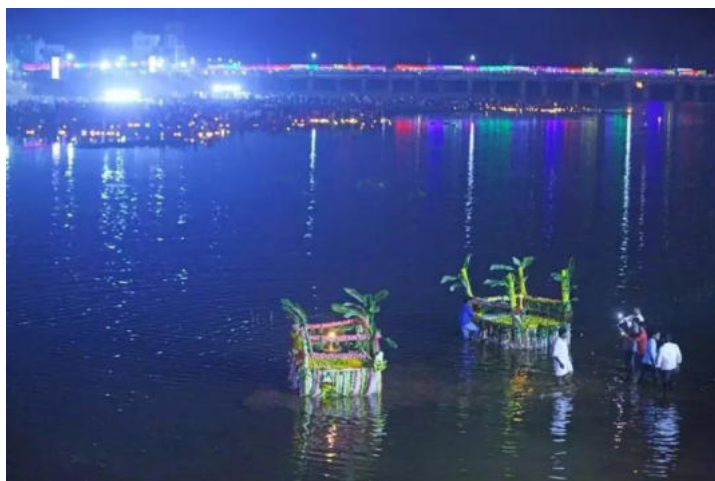














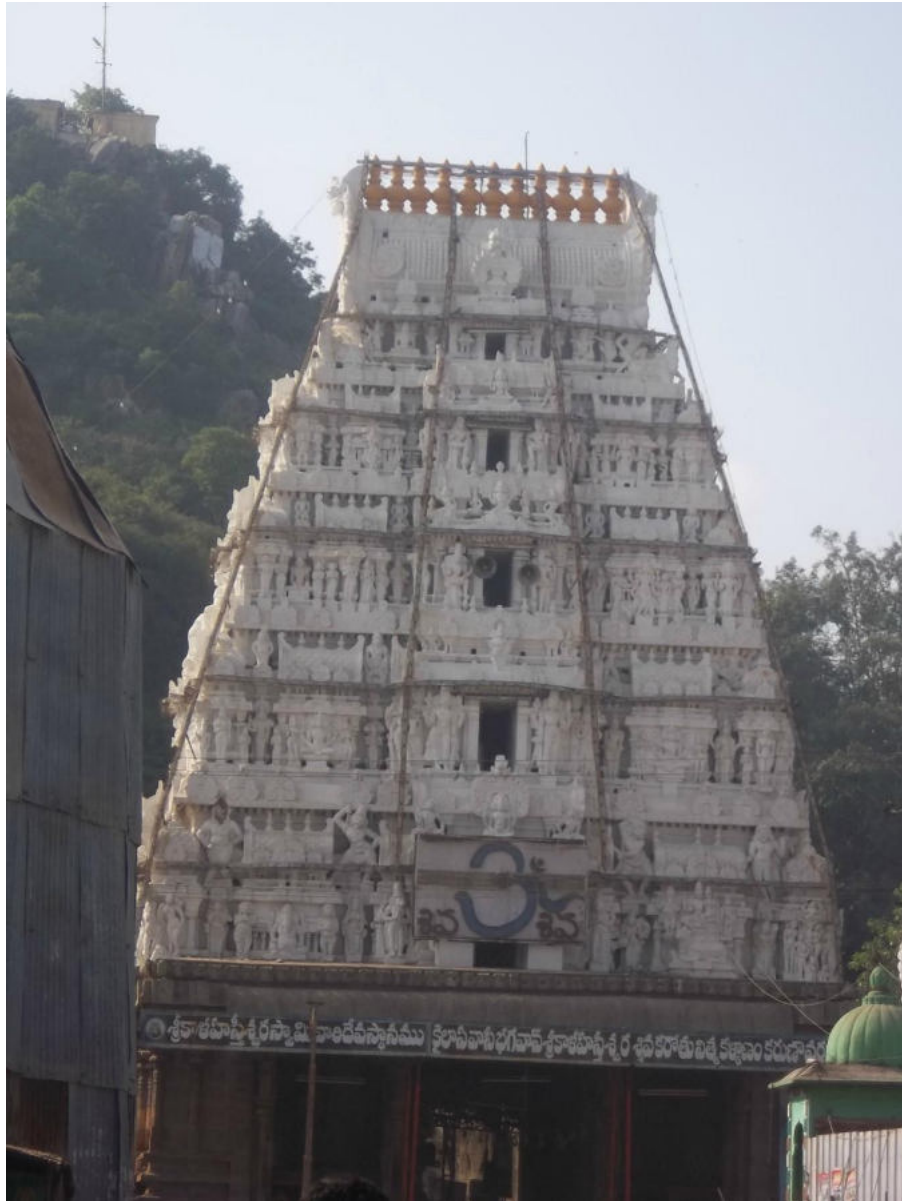






Ref: tripadvisor.in

Photos:



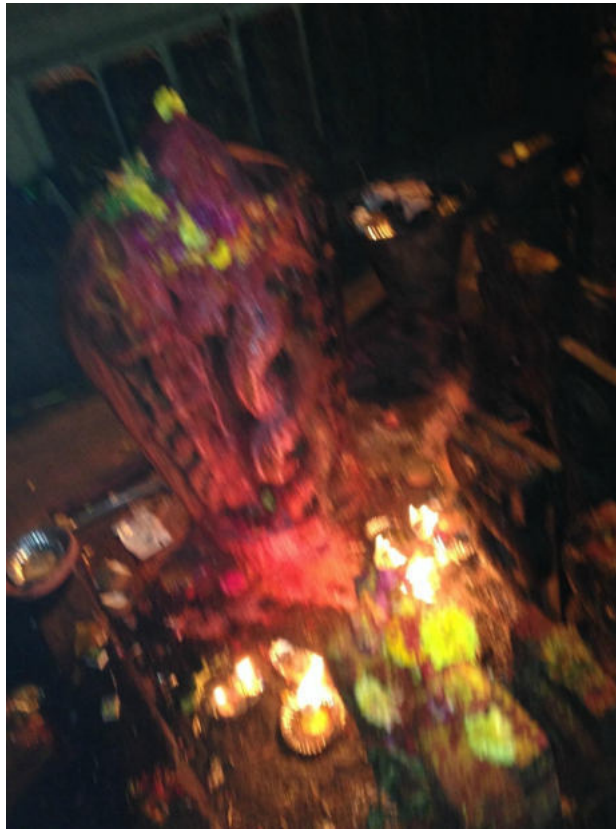














SRIKALAHASTI KSHETRA MAHIMA

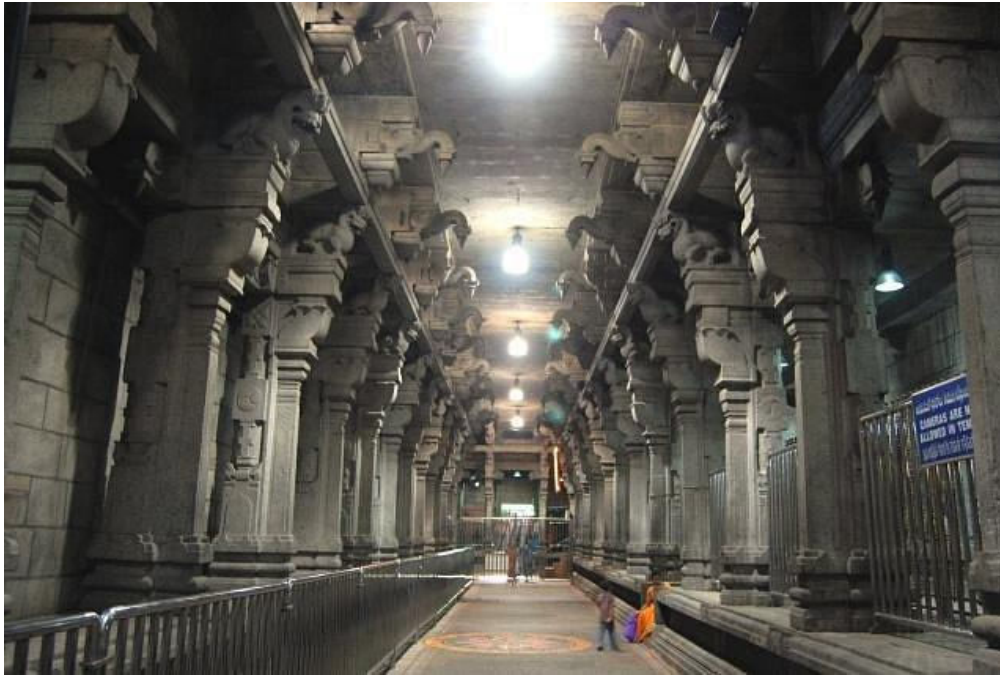
SRIKALAHASTI, WHICH IS SITUATED ON THE BANKS OF SWARNAMUKHI RIVER IS ONE OF THE MOST FAMOUS SAIVITE KSHETRAM OF SOUTH INDIA. THIS SACRED PLACE IS ALSO CALLED AS DAKSHINAKASI BHASKARA KSHETRAM. RAHU-KETHU KSHETRAM IN THIS SACRED PLACE LORD SHIVA WHO IS THE CONSORT OF DIVINE MOTHER, PARVATHI HAS MANIFESTED HIMSELF AT SRIKALAHASTI IN THE FORM OF A LINGA. THE LINGA AT SRIKALAHASTI IS ONE OF THE SACRED PANCHA LINGA OF UNIVERSE. THE PANCHA LINGAS ARE (PRITHVI BHARATHI) JALA (WATER) AGNI (FIRE) VAYU (AIR) AND AKASALINGAM (SKY). THE LINGAM AT SRIKALAHASTI IS VAYU LINGAM. IT IS SAID TO HAVE MANIFESTED HIMSELF AT THE TIME OF CREATION OF UNIVERSE. THE LINGAM IS MADE OF AIR, AND THERE FOR HE CANOT BE SEEN BUT FELT. THE FLICKERING LAMPS IN THE LORDS SANCTUM SANCTORUM IN THE TEMPLE ARE PROOF AND EVIDENCE OF THE MANIFESTATION OF THE VAYU LINGAM.

ANOTHER SELF MANIFESTED LINGAM IN THE TEMPLE WHICH IS VISIBLE TO MORTAL EYES IS THAT OF SRIKALAHASTEESWARA SWAMI VARU. THIS LINGAM IS AS OLD AS THE VAYU LINGAM AND IS CONSIDERED VERY SACRED. THE LINGAM IS NOT LESS THAN FOUR FEET HIGH. THE SPIDER (SRI) THE ELEPHANT TWIN TUSKS (HASTI) AND A FIVE HEADED SARPA (KALA) AND A TRIBAL BY NAME 'THINNADU' WORSHIPED THE LORD AND GOT MOKSASAYOJYA. THIS THINNADU WAS ARJUNA IN HIS PREVIOUS BIRTH AND BECAME KANNAPPA BY OFFERING HIS EYES TO SRIKALAHASTEESWARA.

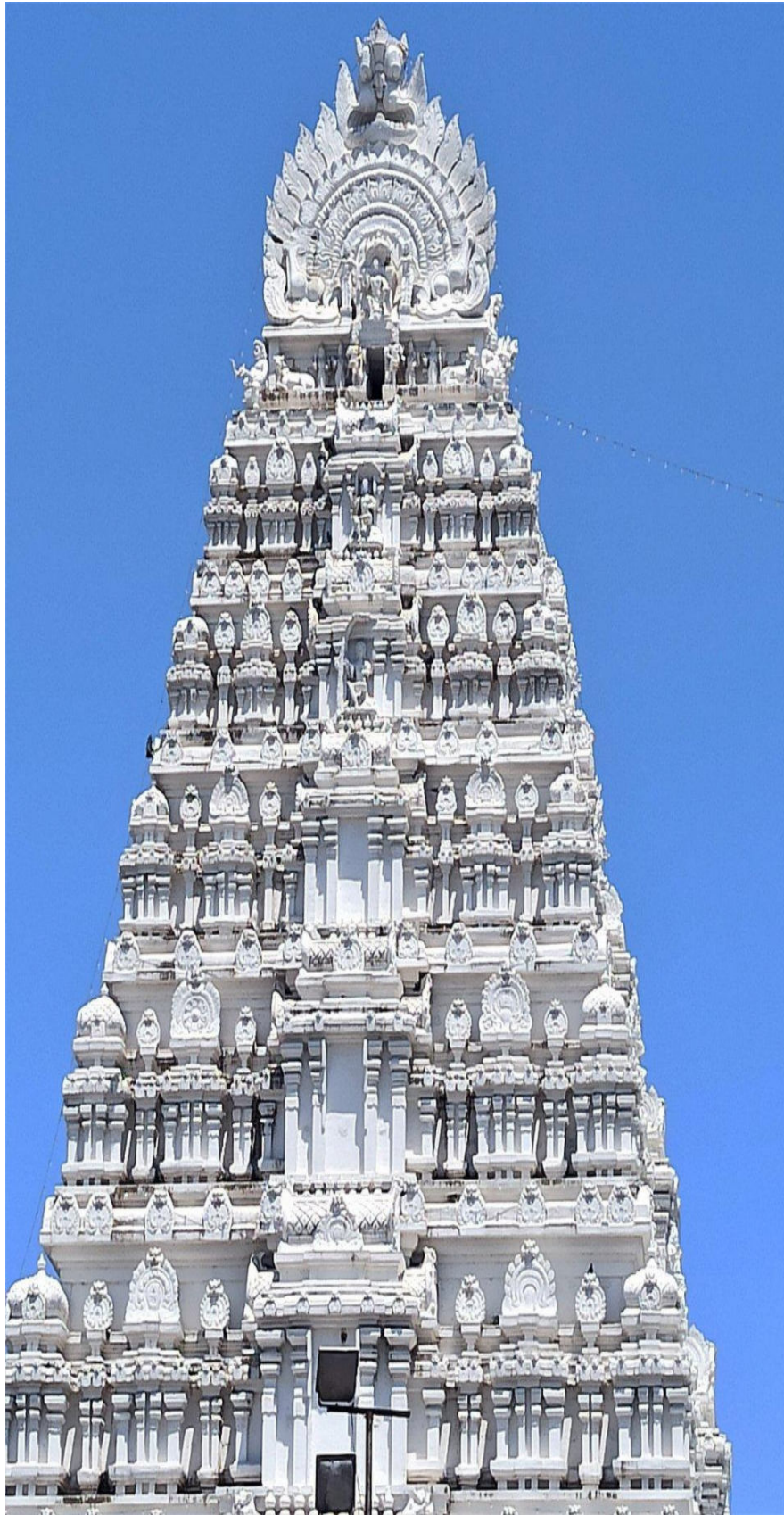
HERE THE SWARNAMUKHI RIVER IS FLOWING TOUCHING THE MOUNTAIN OF KAILASAGIRI. IT IS FLOWING TOWARDS NORTH. THIS IS A DEVIN RIVER HAVING THE POWER OF REMOVING ALL SINS. THIS IS THE INCARNATION OF THE GANGES, WHICH CAME TO THE EARTH FROM THE HEAVENS, BECAUSE OF SAINT ASASTHYA'S DEEP MEDITATION. THIS RIVER IS A BOON FROM LORD BRAHMA.

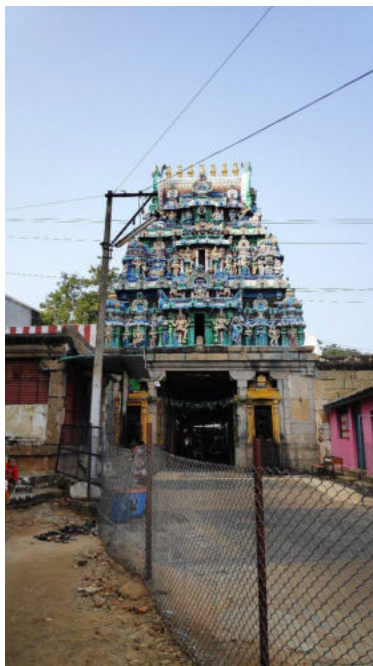
THE TEMPLE OF LORD SRIKALAHASTEESWARASWAMY IS A FOUR SIDED SALVATION GIVING BRIGHT GLOW. THIS TEMPLE IS FULL OF SCULPTURAL BEAUTY PHYSICALLY AND STRUCTURALLY. THIS IS THE OTHER FORM OF SIVATMAKAM IN SPIRITUALITY. IT IS ON EIGHT WHEELED SALVATION GETTING FORM. IT IS A GREAT THING TO HAVE THE DARSHAN OF THIS HOLY PLACE, WHICH HAS ENORMOUS DIVINE POWER.













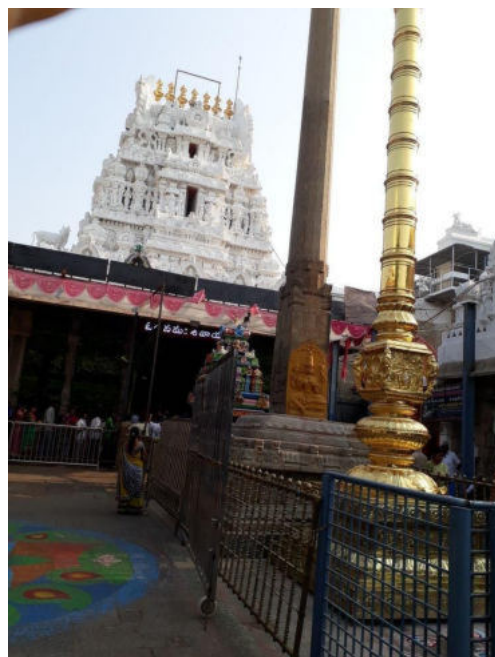




















Videos:

Sri Kalahasteeswara temple - teerthayatra: <https://youtu.be/brJqepHUsBE>

Sri Kalahasteeswara temple: <https://youtu.be/DIPnQnz716I>

Temple history, secrets: <https://youtu.be/ixN47s5U8iY>

Temple glittering with light: <https://youtu.be/93AwtFsLK7A>

Kalahasti temple of salvation: https://youtu.be/_6azZ88itug

Kalahasti temple teerthayatra: <https://youtu.be/EqvgxNPINDY>

Making Rahu - Ketu idols in temple: <https://youtu.be/LoAi1NhVZZY>

Kalahasti temple- travel diary: https://youtu.be/iv8eU-_St_U

Kalahasti temple- unknown facts: https://youtu.be/fU_8BSF7Rqc

Information on RahuKetu pooja: <https://youtu.be/PUiHHtp1fLc>

Kalahasti temple-renovation works going slow: https://youtu.be/Ad1uGLc_gN0

Kalahasti temple- teerthayatra: <https://youtu.be/a4tVEFScZI8>

Sri Kalahasti rajagopuram: https://youtu.be/t4LNc_vKZ_U

16 Tons of silver of Kalahasti temple: <https://youtu.be/lqQVRoMlzBc>

Installation of new Shiva lingam in Kalahasti: <https://youtu.be/4nweFkbqLmQ>

Kalahasti temple prasadam controversy: https://youtu.be/nml_pWEo9o4

Foreigners performing RahuKetu pooja: https://youtu.be/Br_ymZ212r4

Kalahasti temple- teerthayatra: <https://youtu.be/VSUzF9RAmy0>

Audra Nakshatram pooja at Kalahasti: <https://youtu.be/UJYnpghZwTA>

Sri Kalahasti temple: https://youtu.be/1_xWVW37deY

Kalahasti trip in one day: <https://youtu.be/dsulqEAEUDM>

Kalahasti temple- facts (Kannada): <https://youtu.be/s91OyUoVfJY>

Kalahasteeswara vayu lingam: <https://youtu.be/mS1PDB8sGwY>

Kalahasti temple- teerthayatra: <https://youtu.be/gesGQtlj8X0>

Temple history etc: <https://youtu.be/gesGQtlj8X0>

Kalahasti temple remains open during "Chandra grahan":
<https://youtu.be/8JC5HDofZ7U>

Mahashivaratri: <https://youtu.be/UFhpWYeDh7k>

Kalahasti temple and Swarnamukhi river: <https://youtu.be/0NA70daYJg8>

**Panchabhoota Sthalams-
Five Shiva temples representing five elements of Nature**

4. Sri Arunachaleswarar temple, Thiruvannamalai, T. N.

Compiled by: M. Thirumaleshwar
Email: tmuliya@rediffmail.com



Ref: Wikipedia

Arunachala hill in the town of Thiruvannamalai in Tamil Nadu, India. It is significant to the Hindu sect of Shaivism as one of the temples associated with the five elements, the Pancha Bhoota Stalas, and specifically the element of fire, or Agni.

Shiva is worshiped as Arunachalesvara or Annamalaiyar, and is represented by the lingam, with his idol referred to as Agni lingam. His consort Parvati is depicted as Unnamalai Amman.[2][3] The presiding deity is revered in the 7th century Tamil Saiva canonical work, the Tevaram, written by Tamil saint poets known as the nayanars and classified as Paadal Petra Sthalam. The 9th century Saiva saint poet Manikkavasagar composed the Tiruvempaavai here.

The temple complex covers 10 hectares, and is one of the largest in India.[4] It houses four gateway towers known as gopurams. The tallest is the eastern tower, with 11 stories and a height of 66 metres (217 ft), making it one of the tallest temple towers in India built by sevappa nayakkar (Nayakar dynasty)[4] The temple has numerous shrines, with those of Arunachalesvara and Unnamalai Amman being the most prominent. The temple complex houses many halls; the most notable is the thousand-pillared hall built during the Vijayanagar period.

The present masonry structure was built during the Chola dynasty in the 9th century, while later expansions are attributed to Vijayanagara rulers of the Sangama Dynasty (1336–1485 CE), the Saluva Dynasty and the Tuluva Dynasty (1491–1570 CE). The temple is maintained and administered by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Department of the Government of Tamil Nadu.

The temple has six daily rituals at various times from 5:30 a.m. to 10 p.m., and twelve yearly festivals on its calendar. The Karthigai Deepam festival is celebrated during the day of the full moon between November and December, and a huge beacon is lit atop the hill. It can be seen from miles around, and symbolizes the Shiva lingam of fire joining the sky.[5] The event is witnessed by three million pilgrims. On the day preceding each full moon, pilgrims circumnavigate the temple base and the Arunachala hills in a worship called Girivalam, a practice carried out by one million pilgrims yearly.

Legend



The Annamalai hills with temple towers in the foreground

In Hindu mythology, Parvati, wife of Shiva, once closed the eyes of her husband playfully in a flower garden at their abode atop Mount Kailash. Although only a moment for the gods, all light was taken from the universe, and the earth, in turn, was submerged in darkness for years. Parvati performed penance along with other devotees of Shiva.[7] Then her husband appeared as a column of fire at the top of Annamalai hills, returning light to the world.[8] He then merged with Parvati to form Ardhanarishvara, the half-female, half-male form of Shiva.[9] The Arunachala, or red mountain, lies behind the Arunachalesvara temple, and is associated with the temple of its namesake.[3] The hill itself is sacred and considered a lingam, or iconic representation of Shiva.[10]

Another legend is that once, while Vishnu and Brahma contested for superiority, Shiva appeared as a flame, and challenged them to find his source.[11][12] Brahma took the form of a swan, and flew to the sky to see the top of the flame, while Vishnu became the boar Varaha, and sought its base.[11] The scene is called lingothbava, and is represented in the western wall at the sanctum of most Shiva temples.[11] Neither Brahma nor Vishnu could find the source even.[11]

History



Gateway tower with multiple storeys

The Raja gopuram – the Eastern gateway, the tallest temple tower and a view of the tank

The 7th century Nayanar saints Sambandar and Appar wrote of the temple in their poetic work, Tevaram. Sekkizhar, the author of the Periyapuram wrote that both Appar and Sambandar worshiped Arunachalesvara in the temple.[13] The Chola Kings ruled over the region for more than four centuries, from 850 CE to 1280 CE, and were temple patrons. The inscriptions from the Chola king record various gifts like land, sheep, cow and oil to the temple commemorating various victories of the dynasty.[14] The Hoysala kings used Tiruvannamalai as their capital beginning in 1328 CE.[15][12] There are 48 inscriptions from the Sangama Dynasty (1336–1485 CE), 2 inscriptions from Saluva Dynasty, and 55 inscriptions from Tuluva Dynasty (1491–1570 CE) of the Vijayanagara Empire, reflecting gifts to the temple from their rulers.[16] There are also inscriptions from the rule of Krishnadeva Raya (1509–1529 CE), the most powerful Vijayanagara king, indicating further patronage.[17] Most of the Vijayanagara inscriptions were written in Tamil, with some in Kannada and Sanskrit.[18] The inscriptions in temple from the Vijayanagara kings indicate emphasis on administrative matters and local concerns, which contrasts the inscriptions of the same rulers in other temples like Tirupathi. The majority of the gift related inscriptions are for land endowments, followed by goods, cash endowments, cows and oil for lighting lamps.[17] The town of Tiruvannamalai was at a strategic crossroads during the Vijayanagara Empire, connecting sacred centers of pilgrimage and military routes.[19] There are inscriptions that show the area as an urban center before the precolonial period, with the city developing around the temple.[19][20]

During the 17th century CE, the temple along with the Tiruvannamalai town came under the dominion of the Nawab of the Carnatic. As the Mughal empire came to an end, the Nawab lost control of the town, with confusion and chaos ensuing after 1753.[8] Subsequently, there were periods of both Hindu and Muslim stewardship of the temple, with Muraru Raya, Krishna Raya, Mrithis Ali Khan, and Burkat Ullakhan besieging the temple in succession. As European incursions progressed, Tiruvannamalai was attacked by French Soupries, Sambrinet, and the English Captain Stephen Smith. While some were repelled, others were victorious. The French occupied the town in 1757, and the temple along with the town came under control of the British in 1760.[14] In 1790 CE, Tiruvannamalai town was captured by Tippu Sultan, who ruled from 1750–99 CE.[8] During the first half of the 19th century, the town along with the temple came under British rule.[14] From 1951, under the provision of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Act, the temple has been maintained by the Hindu Religious and Endowment Board (HR &CE) of the Government of Tamil Nadu.[13] In 2002, the Archaeological Survey of India declared the temple a national heritage monument and took over its stewardship. Widespread protests and litigation with the Supreme Court of India, however, led the Archaeological Survey to cede the temple back to the Hindu Religious and Endowment Board.[21][22]

Architecture



Temple tower with people passing through.



View of the temple complex

Complex and towers



Towers

The temple is situated at the bottom of the Arunachala hills, and faces east, lying over 25 acres. The walls on the east and west measure 700 ft (210 m), the south 1,479 ft (451 m), and the north 1,590 ft (480 m). The present masonry and towers date back to the 9th century CE, as seen from an inscription in the structure made by Chola kings who ruled at that time.[12][23] Further inscriptions indicate that before the 9th century, Tiruvannamalai was under the Pallava Kings, who ruled from Kanchipuram.[17] It has four gateway towers, the

gopuram, on its four sides. The eastern tower, the Rajagopuram, is the tallest in the temple. The base of the Rajagopuram is made of granite, measuring 135 ft (41 m) by 98 ft (30 m).[13] It was begun by king Krishnadevaraya (1509–29 CE) of the Vijayanagara dynasty, and completed by Sevappa Nayaka (1532–80 CE).[24][14][12] The inscriptions indicate that the tower was built at the behest of Sivanesa and his brother Lokanatha in 1572 CE.[25] The south tower is called Thirumanjangopuram, and the west tower is called Pe Gopuram. Ammani Amman gourami in the north. Raghunathabhyudayam and Sangitha Sudha, both Nayak scriptures, also describe the towers.[25] The Tanjavuri Andhra Raja Charitamu mentions that Krishnadevaraya built the tower and the outer precincts of the temple.[25] The temple has a total of five precincts,[26] each of which holds a huge Nandi, the sacred bull of Shiva. Towers include the Vallala Maharaja Gopuram and Kili Gopuram, or Parrot Tower.

Shrines



Shrine inside the Arunachalesvara Temple

The main shrine of Arunachalesvara faces east, housing images of Nandi and Surya, and is the oldest structure in the temple.[26] Behind the walls of the sanctum, there is an image of Venugopalaswamy (Krishna), an incarnation of Vishnu. Around the sanctum, there are images of Somaskandar, Durga, Chandekeswarar, Gajalakshmi, Arumugaswami, Dakshinamoorthy, Swarnabairavar, Nataraja, and Lingodbhavar—the last an image of Shiva emanating from lingam. The Palliyarai, the divine room for resting deities, is located at the first precinct around the sanctum. The shrine of his consort, Annamalai Amman, lies in the second precinct, with Amman depicted in a standing posture. Sambantha Vinayagar, the elephant god shrine, is located to the north of the flagstaff and the Bali peeta, or platform for sacrifice.[27] To the south of the thousand-pillared hall, there is a small shrine for Subramaya

and a large tank.[5] Pathala Lingam, the underground lingam, is the place where Ramana Maharshi (1879 – 1950 CE) is believed to have performed his penance.[28][29] The shrine of Sivagangai Vinayagar is present in the northern bank of the Sivanganga tank.[27]

Halls



The View of Thousand Pillar Mahal at temple premises

There is a sixteen pillared Deepa Darshana Mandapam, or hall of light, in the third precinct. The temple tree, Magizha, is considered sacred and medicinal, and childless couples tie small cradles to its branches in obeisance. Vedas write that the mast of the temple separated the earth and the sky during creation of the universe.[30] The Kalyana Mandapam, the marriage hall, is in the south-west of the precinct, and is built in Vijayanagara style. A stone trident is present in the outer shrine of the temple in open air, and has protective railings like a sacred tree.[31] The Vasantha Mandapam, meaning the Hall of spring, is the third precinct, and contains the temple office and Kalahateeswarar shrine.[32] The fourth precinct has an image of Nandi, Brahma Theertham, the temple tank, the Yanai Thirai Konda Vinayaga shrine, and a hall with a six-foot-tall statue of Nandi, erected by Vallala Maharaja.[27]

Inside the doorway of the first tower and the fifth precinct, there is a thousand-pillared hall built during the late Vijayanagara period.[5] Krishnadevaraya constructed the hall and dug the tank opposite to it.[5][33] The pillars in the hall are carved with images of yali, a mythological beast with body of lion and head of an elephant, a symbol of Nayak power.[34] The Arunagirinathar Mandapam is located to the right of the Kalayana Linga Sundara Eswara Mandapam, and the Gopurathilayanar shrine is to the left of a broad flight of stone stairs that lead up to the Vallala Gopuram.[32]

Worship and festivals



Temple towers ornamented with lights



Decorated wooden car of a temple drawn by devotees

The temple priests perform the pooja (rituals) during festivals and on a daily basis. Like other Shiva temples of Tamil Nadu, the priests belong to the Shaivaite community, a Brahmin sub-caste. The temple rituals are performed by pandit six times a day; Ushatkalam at 5:30 a.m., Kalashanti at 8:00 a.m., Uchikalam at 10:00 a.m., Sayarakshai at 6:00 p.m., Irandamkalam at 8:00 p.m. and Arddha Jamam at 10:00 p.m.[35] Each ritual comprises four steps: abhishekam (sacred bath), alankaram (decoration), naivedyam (food offering) and deepa aradhanai (waving of lamps) for both Arunachaleshvara and Unnamulai Amman. The

worship is held amidst music with nagaswaram (pipe instrument) and tavil (percussion instrument), religious instructions in the Vedas read by priests and prostration by worshippers in front of the temple mast. There are weekly rituals like somavaram and sukravaram, fortnightly rituals like pradosham and monthly festivals like amavasai (new moon day), kruttika, purnima (full moon day) and chaturthi.[35]

The temple celebrates dozens of festivals throughout the year.[36] Four prime festivals, the Brahmothsavam, are celebrated yearly. The most important of these lasts ten days during the Tamil month of Karthikai, between November and December, concluding with the celebration of Karthikai Deepam. A huge lamp is lit in a cauldron, containing three tons of ghee, at the top of the Arunachala hills during the Deepam.[5][37] To mark the occasion, the festival image of Arunachalesvara is taken around the wooden chariot around the mountain.[38] Inscriptions indicate that the festival was celebrated as early as the Chola period (from 850 CE to 1280 CE) and was expanded to ten days in the twentieth century.[26]



Temple deities in a procession.

Every full moon, tens of thousands of pilgrims worship Arunachalesvara by circumambulating the Arunachala hill barefoot.[5] The circumambulation covers a distance of 14 kilometres (8.7 mi), and is referred as Girivalam.[39][6] According to Hindu legend, the walk removes sins, fulfils desires and helps achieve freedom from the cycle of birth and rebirth.[13] Offerings are made in a string of tanks, shrines, pillared meditation halls, springs and caves around the hill.[3] The circumambulation continues during the rest of the month. On the day of yearly Chitra Pournami, the full moon of the Tamil calendar, hundreds of thousands of pilgrims come from across the world to worship Arunachalesvara. Five temple cars, called ther, with wooden carvings, are used for the procession.[13]

Tiruwoodal is another festival celebrated during the first week of the Tamil month Thai at mid-January of every year. On the morning of Maatu Pongal, between 15 and 16 January, Nandi is decorated with garlands made of fruits, vegetables and sweets. The festival deities of Arunachalesvara and Unnamamulai Amman are taken out of the temple to Tiruoodal street to enact the oodal (or love tiff) between the two in the evening.[40][13]

Religious significance

The Arunachalesvara temple is one of the Pancha Bhoota Sthalams, or five Shiva temples, with each a manifestation of a natural element: earth, water, air, sky and fire.[41] In Arunachalesvara temple, Shiva is said to have manifested himself as a massive column of fire, whose crown and feet could not be found by the Hindu gods, Brahma and Vishnu. The main lingam in the shrine is referred as Agni Lingam, and represents duty, virtue, self-sacrifice and liberation through ascetic life at the end of the Agni kalpa.[42]

Aathara Stala are Shiva temples which are considered to be personifications of the Tantric chakras of human anatomy. The Arunachalesvara temple is called the Manipooraga stalam,[32] and is associated with the Manipooraga chakra. Manipooraga is the chakra associated with the solar plexus.[43]

Saints and literary mention

Tirugnana Sambandar, a 7th-century Tamil Saivite poet, venerated Arunachalesvara and Unnamulai Amman in ten verses in Tevaram, compiled as the First Tirumurai.[44] Appar, a contemporary of Sambandar, also venerated Arunachalesvara in 10 verses in Tevaram, compiled as the Fifth Tirumurai.[45] As the temple is revered in Tevaram, it is classified as Paadal Petra Sthalam, one of the 276 temples that find mention in the Saiva canon.[46]

Manickavasagar, a 9th-century Tamil saint and poet, revered Arunachalesvara in his writing, describing the deity as "AnnAmalai".[47] He composed the Thiruvempavai in the Tamil month of Margazhi at the temple.[48] Arunagirinathar was a 15th-century Tamil poet born in Tiruvannamalai. He spent his early years as a rioter and seducer of women. After ruining his health, he tried to commit suicide by throwing himself from the northern tower, but was saved by the grace of god Murugan.[49] He became a staunch devotee and composed Tamil hymns glorifying Murugan, the most notable being Thirupugazh.[14][50]

The western world learnt of Tiruvannamalai during the mid 20th century, through the work of Ramana Maharishi (1879–1950 CE).[2][51] The cave where Ramana meditated is on the lower slopes of the Arunachala hills, with the ashram further down at the foothills.[29][52] The basement of the raised hall inside the temple has the Patala Lingam, where Ramana attained supreme awareness while ants devoured his flesh.[52] The place is also called a Mukthi Sthalam, meaning place of salvation, and saints like Seshadri Swamikal, Gugai Namachivayar and Yogi Ramsuratkumar have been associated with the temple.

Ref: arunachaleswarartemple.tnhrce.in



Shiva is known by devotees as Annamalayar or Arunachaleswarar. And this is believed to be the largest temple in the world dedicated to Shiva. The history of this Annamalayar temple dates back to thousand years. Mention has been made in the Thevaram and Thiruvagasam, both great works in Tamil.

Bramha took the form of a swan and flew to see the crown of Siva. Unable to see the crown, Bramha saw a thazhambu flower which had decked Siva's crown falling down. He asked the flower as to the distance of Siva's crown whereby the flower replied that he had been falling for forty thousand years. Bramha, realizing that he would not be able to reach the crown asked the flower to act as a false witness.

The thazhambu flower acting as a false witness declared that Brahma had seen the crown. Siva became angry at the deception and cursed that Bramha should have no temple on earth and that the thazhambu flower should not be used while praying to Lord Siva. The place where Lord Siva stood as a column of fire to eliminate the ego is Thiruvannamalai.

The Saiva cult is a world phenomenon. Thiruvannamalai is the capital of Saivism. The South Indian deity Siva is the God of all countries. Annamalaiannal is the most sacred of the names of the manifestation of Lord Siva.

Pooja Timing

Pooja	Time
Ukshakala	05:30 A.M
Kala santhi	08:00 A.M
Uchikala	11:30 A.M
Sayaratchai	05:30 P.M
Irاندam Kala	07:30 P.M
Arthajama	09:00 P.M

History

Lingothbavar

The Creator Lord Bramha and Protector Lord Thirumal entered into a controversy among themselves so as to ascertain who was the greatest. Lord Siva was asked to be the judge. Lord Siva told them that whoever was able to see his crown as well as his feet would be termed as the greatest. Then Lord Siva transformed himself into a Jothi (a column of fire)

touching the heaven and earth. Thirumal took the avatar of varaha (wild boar) and dug deep into the earth to find Siva's feet but at last accepted defeat. Bramha took the form of a swan and flew to see the crown of Siva. Unable to see the crown, Bramha saw a thazhambu flower which had decked Siva's crown falling down. He asked the flower as to the distance of Siva's crown whereby the flower replied that he had been falling for forty thousand years. Bramha, realizing that he would not be able to reach the crown asked the flower to act as a false witness.



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The Annamalai Hill was Agni (fire) during Krithayugam, was Manikkam (Emerald) during Threthayugam, was pon (Gold) during Dwaprayugam and rock during Kaliyugam as per the ancient legends. On the request of Thirumal and Bramha by their devout prayer, Siva who was in the form of a fire column took the form of a Sivalingam at the foot of the hill where the Arulmigu Annamalaiyar Temple is located.

Arthanareeswarar



Lord Siva's wife Goddess Umadevi once playfully closed His eyes which plunged the world into darkness. All living beings suffered in the dark. To absolve herse of this sin Mother Umadevi created a Sivalingam out of sand and worshipped at Kancheepuram.

At that instance, Lord Siva ordered her to proceed to Thiruvannamalai and do penance so that she could get half of His body. Likewise Mother Parvathi did penance at Pavalakundru with the help of Saint Gowthama. A demon called Makidasuran disturbed the penance of Mother Parvathi. The Mother took the form of goddess Durga Devi and destroyed him on the full moon day of the Tamil Month of Karthigai during the auspicious period of pradosham. Lord Siva presented himself in the form of Fire atop the hill and merged Goddess Parvathi on the left half of his body.

To commemorate this event, every year during the Tamil month of Karthigai in Kiruthigai Star, exactly at 6.00 p.m. Arthanareeswaramurthi presents himself as Jyothi Swaroopa to his devotees at the time of Karthigai Festival 10th day.

The following legends are also associated with this temple :

Appearance of Lord Muruga



Saint Arunagirinathar was the ardent devotee of Lord Muruga. Sambandan was a scholar in the king's court and had obtained many boons from goddess Kali. Afraid of Arunagirinathar's popularity, he proposed to the king a competition between him and Arunagirinathar, as to who could bring his chosen deity manifest in the form visible to everyone present. In the competition the devotion of Arunagirinathar brought the appearance of Lord Muruga through a stone pillar. Since then this has become one of the famous places of visit for the devotees of Lord Muruga.

Vallala Maharaja humiliated by Lord Siva

After completed the construction of this Gopuram King Ballala became proud of his achievement. In order to teach him a lesson, Lord Arunachaleswarar refused to leave the temple through the Vallala Gopuram during first 9 days of 10 day Special Festival.

The King was distressed and prayed for his forgiveness. Only then, Lord Arunachaleswarar consented to pass through this gopuram on the 10th day of the festival. This is a lesson taught by Lord Siva about humility and greatness, not only to King Ballala but to everyone.

Arunagirinathar saved by Lord Muruga

In his earlier years Arunagirinathar climbed the Vallala Maharaja Gopuram and attempted to fall off. Lord Muruga appeared before him and saved his life. Since then Arunagirinathar became known as Gopurathilayanar.

Lord Arunachaleswarar himself performing the funeral rites of King Vallala

Arunachala Puram describes King Vallala as an embodiment of all human virtues. He was praised for his uprightness, generosity and love for Lord Arunachaleswarar. The King had no issues. Lord Siva tested him for his piety and became a child at the hands of king Vallala and his wife. King Vallala embraced the child in all his lovingness and later Lord Siva disappeared. When the king prayed for a child, Lord Siva assured him that would perform all his funeral rites as he himself became a child to the king. Even now in the month of Maasi (February) when the annual anniversary of King Vallala Deva's death occurs, at the instruction of Lord Arunachaleswarar, the Lord is taken in procession with great Ceremony to the village Pallikonda Pattu, where the funeral rites take place. This festival is known as 'Masi Maga Theerthavari' Urchavam.

Arunagirinathar's Life force entering into the body of a Parrot



The Vijayanagar King Pravda Deva Maharaya, once lost his vision and was blind. Sambandar, a confidant to the king advised him to get the flower Parijatham to regain his sight and suggested that Arunagirinathar could do the job. The king was convinced and asked Arunagirinathar to bring Parijatha flower.

As the Parijatha flower is in heaven, Arunagirinathar moved his life force into the body of parrot, after keeping his own body in the gopuram. Even before his return with Parijatha flower his body was cremated. As he could not get his human form back, Arunagirinathar remained as parrot and composed great songs including Kandaranubuti.

Thiruvannamalai - Annamalaiannal

The Saiva cult is a world phenomenon. Thiruvannamalai is the capital of Saivism. The South Indian deity Siva is the God of all countries. Annamalaiannal is the most sacred of the names of the manifestation of Lord Siva.

Saint poets

Saint poets Thirugnana Sambandar, Thirunavukkarasar, Sundarar and so on have visited Thiruvannamalai, prayed to the Lord and have composed divine poems. Saint Manickavasagar had lived at Thiruvannamalai for long period and had composed "Thiruvempavai - 20" and "Thiruvammanai". Even today there is a temple for Saint Manickavasagar on the Girivalam path at Adi-Annamalai.

Thirumurai Thalam

There are 275 sacred places (Lord Siva Temples) which were praised by the hymns of Thevaram and were called "Thirumurai Thalanga". Of these places twenty two are found in Nadu Naadu (a part of Tamil Nadu). Thiruvannamalai is the most sacred of these twenty two.

Place of Salvation

SivaPuranam identifies four sacred places for obtaining salvation. Thiruvannamalai is one among them. The significance of this place is that by mere remembrance of Lord Arunachaleswarar at this place gives salvation to all souls (Ninaithale Mukthi Tharum Thiruthalam).

Pancha Bootha Sthalam

The earth is formed by five basic elements namely land, water, fire, air and ether. Our ancestors called them "Pancha Boothas" and associated them with five sacred places for worshipping Lord Siva. The center of these five elements fire is identified with Thiruvannamalai.

Athara Sthalams

Thiruvannamalai is the "Manipooraga Sthalam", which is one among six athara sthalams. Thiruvannamalai is so sacred that even Gods, and celestials offered their prayers. Tradition has it that Sun, Moon, Eight Vasus, Brahma, Vishnu and so on have worshipped here.

Saints and Scholars

Thiruvannamalai has been the abode of Siddhars. Idaikkattu Siddhar, one of the eighteen Siddhars, belongs to this sacred soil. Thiruvannamalai has the honour of providing an abode for saints such as Arunagirinathar, Vitpatchathevar, Gugai Namachivayar, Guru Namachivayar, Deivasigamani, Arunachala Desikar, Mahan Seshadri Swamigal, Bagawan Ramana Maharishi, Sri Yogi Ram Surathkumar and the like.

Girivalam:

The Significance of Girivalam (Circumambulation)

In most of the holy places the Deity is found atop the hill. But here the Holy hill itself is the Deity (Lord Annamalaiyar) and is worshipped. "Arunam" means sun and denotes the red colour of fire. "Asalam" means "Giri" or "malai" (mountain). Thus "Arunachalam" means the Holy hill which is red in colour. The Holy hill is 2668 ft. high.

The Annamalai Hill was Agni (fire) during Kirthayugam, was Manikkam (Emerald) during Threthayugam, was Pon (Gold) during Dwaparayugam and rock during Kaliyugam. There are eight lingams located at the eight directions and provides an octagonal structure to Thiruvannamalai Town. The eight lingams are: Indra Lingam, Agni Lingam, Yama Lingam, Niruthi Lingam, Varuna Lingam, Vayu Lingam, Kubera Lingam and Esanya Lingam. The Adi Annamalai Temple glorified in Dhevaram is located on this path.

The circumambulation path is 14 kilometres. History has it that even today a number of siddhars are living on the hill. It is auspicious to perform "Girivalam" during every Full moon day which would do immense good. It is because during Full Moon Day siddhars movement would be there and the whole atmosphere would be filled with perfumes of herbal plants. This will provide peace of mind and good health to body. It is a proven fact that on every Full moon day lakhs of devotees circumambulate the Hill and get all benefits by praying to Lord Annamalaiyar.

The circumambulation path has been provided with sodium lamps at the expense of 12 lakhs donated by cine artist Thiru Rajinikanth. This benefits pilgrims who perform circumambulation during night times. On behalf of Town administration bore well pumps are erected to supply drinking water to pilgrims. Moreover for the benefit of the devotees during special occasions annadhanam is performed by Sri Agasthiar Ashram, and so many donors. Milk is distributed by certain well wishers.

Name	Cardinal direction	Installed By	Dominant Navagraha	Benefits of Worship
Indra Lingam	East	Lord Indiran, the king of Celestials	Sun and Sukiran	Long life and fame
Agni Lingam	South East	Lord Agni (God of Fire)	Chandran (Moon)	Relief from diseases and fear
Yama Lingam	South	Yama, God of Death	Sevvai	Longevity of life span
Niruthilingam	South West	Niruthi, the king of giants	Raghu	Health, Wealth and Fame. Issueless can get children.
Varunalingam	West	Varuna, the God of Rain	Sani (Saturn)	Relief from illness Especially water related diseases
Vayulingam	North West	Vayu the God of air	Kedhu	Relief from illness especially the heart diseases, breathing and stomach problems
Kupera Lingam	North	Kuperan, the God of Wealth	Guru	Wealth and improvement in life status
Easanya Lingam	North East	Easanyan	Budhan	Peace of mind

Festivals

Details of Annual Festivals (urchavam) of the Temple

Sl.No	Tamil Month	Festival Details
1	Chithirai (April - May)	Chitirai vasantha urchavam 10 days.
2	Vaikasi (May - June)	Vaikasi Urchavam 1 day.
3	Ani (June - July)	Ani Bramorchavam 10 days. Ani Thirumanjanam (Lord Nataraja Urchavam 1 day).
4	Adi (July - August)	Adi Pooram Bramorchavam 10 days.
5	Avani (August - Sept.)	Avani Moolam Urchavam 1 day.
6	Puratasi (Sept. - Oct.)	Navarathri Urchavam 9 days.
7	Aippasi (Oct. - Nov.)	Annabisheka Urchavam 1 day. Kanda Sashti urchavam 6 days.
8	Karthigai (Nov. - Dec.)	Karthigai Deepa Bramorchavam 17 days.
9	Margazhi (Dec. - Jan.)	Vaikunda Ekadasi Urchavam 1 day. Arudra Darisanam (Lord Nataraja Urchavam) 1 day.
10	Thai (Jan. - Feb.)	Uthrayana Punyakala Bramorchavam 10 days. Thiruvoodal Urchavam 1 day. Manalurpettai Theerthavari Urchavam 1 day. Kalasapakkam (Rathasapthami). Theerthavari Urchavam 1 day.
11	Masi (Feb. - March)	Maha Sivarathri Urchavam Masi Makam Pallikondpattu Theerthavari Urchavam.
12	Panguni (March - April)	Panguni Uthiram Thirukalyana Urchavam 6 days.



Details of Annual Festivals (urchavam) of the Temple

Urchavam's	Period	Festivals
Sri Durgambal Urchavam	Night	Sri Durgambal on Kamadenu vahanam
Sri Pidari Urchavam	Night	Sri Pidariamman on Lion vahanam
Sri Vinayagar Urchavam	Night	Sri Vinayagar on Mooshiga vahanam
First day festival	Morning	Panchamoorthis Silver Vimanam
Night		Panchamoorthis, Mooshigam, Peacock, Adhikara Nandi, Hamsam small Rishaba Vaganam.
Second day festival	Morning	Sri Vinayagar, Sri Chandrasekara vimanam Sun Crescent mount.
Night		Panchamoorthis, Silver Indra vimanam etc.
Third day festival	Morning	Sri Vinayagar, Sri Chandrasekarar vimanam, Naga vaganam
Night		Panchamoorthis, Simha vaganam, Silver Anna vaganam etc.
Fourth day festival	Morning	Sri Vinayagar, Sri Chandrasekarar vimanam, Naga vimanam
Night		Panchamoorthis, Silver Karpagavritcham, Silver Kamadhenu vaganam and other silver vaganams.
Fifth day festival	Morning	Sri Vinayagar, Sri Chandrasekarar, Mooshigam Mirror Rishaba Vaganam
Night		Panchamoorthis, Silver Moohigam, Silver Peacock, Big Silver Rishaba Vaganam display
Sixth day festival	Morning	Sri Vinayagar, Sri Chandrasekarar, Mooshigam, Silver Elephant, 63 Nayanmars vimanams.
Night		Panchamoorthis Silver car, Indra vimanam and other Silver vimanams.
Seventh day festival	Morning	Panchamoorthis Maharahams between 5.30 a.m. and 7.00 a.m. in Viruchaga Lagnam Ratha Roganam Vadam.
Night		Panchamoorthis reach Asthana Mandapam from the car.
Eighth day festival	Morning	Sri Vinayagar, Sri Chandrasekarar, Silver vimanam
Night		Panchamoorthis, Horse vaganam etc.
Ninth day festival	Morning	Sri Vinayagar, Sri Chandrasekarar, Mirror Vimanam.
Night		Panchamoorthis, Kailasa vaganam, Kamadhenu vaganam etc.
Tenth day festival	Morning	Udayathpurvam 4'O Clock Barani Deepam
Day		Bramhatheertham Theerthavari
Evening	At 6 p.m.	Panchamoorthis on golden vimanams, Jyothi Swarooba Maha Deepam.
Night		Panchamoorthis, Golden Rishaba Vaganam etc.
First day Theppal	Night At 8 p.m.	Sri Chandrasekara Thappal -- Sri Abithakusambal with Sri Arunachaleswarar Giripradhakshanam
Second day Theppal	Night At 8 p.m.	Sri Parasakthi Amman theppal
Third day Theppal	Night At 8 p.m.	Sri Subramaniam theppal
Sri Chandikeswarar Utsavam	Night	Sri Chandikeswarar Utsavam, Silver Vaganam.





Arulmigu Arunachaleswarar Temple - Facilities

Girivalam path

The circumambulation path has been well laid to make the journey on foot more comfortable for pilgrims. To benefit the devotees who perform circumambulation during night times sodium lamps are provided for the entire stretch of 14 Kilometers. Adequate drinking water supply around the hill is provided by Thiruvannamalai Town Administration through borewells. More over for the benefit of devotees food packets and milk are distributed during certain periods in a year by private donors.

To enable the devotees to worship Lord Arunachaleswarar and Goddess Unnamulaiamman quickly and comfortably ceiling fans are provided and the queue lines using GI pipes have been installed at the expense of temple administration. Exhaust fans have also been provided to send out hot air.

For the benefit of devotees roofed queue lines around Swamy Sannathi have been formed with the contribution from donors. In addition to this, in prakarams water tanks have been provided to ensure continuous water supply.

- * The temple authorities have provided accommodation at nominal cost for the benefit of the devotees.
- * The rent for the rest houses is Rs. 400 and Rs. 300 per day.
- * The rent for the rooms at Appar Illam is Rs. 250 per day.
- * The rent for rooms at Unnamulai Amman Rest House is Rs.250 (Double room) and Rs.100 (Single room) per day.
- * Apart from this private accommodation is available in and around the temple.

Sakthi Vilasa Mandapam

Sakthi vilasa Mandapam built by His Holiness Gnaniar swamy was located opposite to Brahma Theertham Tank. Religious functions are held here.

Choultries, Vedic Schools etc.

Nattukkottai Nagarathars have also built choultry for Pilgrims, Annachatram, Vedic school, Oya Madam etc. Besides these, in Thiruvannamalai there exist a lot of Madams (resting places) constructed by various sects of Hindus for the benefit of devotees who visit this place during ordinary and special occasions.

Contact:

Arulmigu Arunachaleswarar Temple
Thiruvannamalai-606601

Phone : 04175- 252438.

E-Mail - arunachaleswarar@tnhrce.com

Transport

Bus:

Tiruvannamalai Bus Stand at 1.5 Kms distance.

Railway Station :

Tiruvannamalai railway Station at 2 Kms distance.

Airport :

Vellore Airport at 91 Kms.

Arunachaleswarar Temple - Tourist Place

LOCATION OF THE TEMPLE

- The temple is located on the Villupuram - Katpadi Railroad and is about 65 kilometers from Villupuram and is about 90 - kilometres form Katpadi.
 - The town is well connected from Chennai and frequent bus services are available, one through Chengleput, Madurantakam, Tindivanam and Gingee, and the other through Sri Perumbudur, Kancheepuram, Vellore and Polur.
 - The town is about 90 kms from Vellore, 60 kms from Tindivanam, 60 kms from Villupuram and 100 kms from Krishnagiri.
 - The town also has a helipad so as to enable devotees to reach it from Chennai and other cities.
 - The temple authorities have provided accommodation at nominal cost for the benefit of the devotees. The rent for Rest Houses is Rs.200 and Rs.150 per day.
 - The rent for rooms at Appar Illam is Rs.100 per day.
 - The rent for rooms at Unnamalai Amman Rest House is Rs.100/-(Double room) and Rs.50/- (Single room) per day.
 - Apart from this, private accommodation is available in and around the temple.
- Sathanur Dam

Built across the river Ponnaiyar, this dam site is a popular picnic spot. Located among forests and hills, Sathanur has many attractions such as the crocodile park, and swimming pool.

Nearest temples:

Arulmigu Lakshmi Narashima Swamy Temple, Vellore

The name Kadigachalam came as the Lord gave darsan to the Saptharishi to a kadigai time and gave mukthi. He also gave darsan to Prahalatha by changing his figure of Terror and in the yoga stage. Lord Anjeneya who is in the yoga stage helped Indrathymna Maharaja in killing the Arakkan Nikumban and saved his country. It was held on Sunday and hence every Sunday is an important one for Siriya Thiruvadi. People take a bath in the Chakka Theertham of the small hill and worship the Lord.

In Karthigai sundays people pray Lord after taking bath in the Chakka Theertham and by lying down on its steps. People believe that Lord come and fulfill the wishes of the devotees in their dreams.

Link : www.sholinghurnarasimhar.tnhrce.in

Arulmigu Ekambaranathar Temple, Kanchipuram

Ekambareswarar Temple is one of the famous Hindu temples dedicated to Lord Shiva, located in Kanchipuram in the state of Tamil Nadu, India.

It is one of the five major Shiva temples or Pancha Bootha Sthalams (each representing a natural element) representing the element - Earth. The other four temples in this category are Thiruvanaikaval Jambukeswara (water), Chidambaram Natarajar (ether), Thiruvannamalai Arunachaleswara (fire) and Kalahasti Nathar (wind).

All of the four revered Saivite Saints have sung the glories of this temple.

This vast temple is one of the most ancient in India having been in existence since at least 600 AD. Second century AD Tamil poetry speaks of Kama kottam, and the Kumara kottam (currently the Kamakshi Amman temple and the Subramanya temple). The existing structure then, was pulled down and rebuilt by the Pallava Kings. The Cholas, who came later, also made several contributions to the temple.

Link : www.ekambaranathartemple.tnhrce.in

Arulmigu Kamakshi Amman Temple, Mangadu

The Kamakshi Amman Temple of Mangadu is a Hindu temple in Mangadu, a suburb of Chennai, India. The term Mangadu means "Mango Forests or Mango Grooves" and as the term implies this must have been a thickly wooded Mango groove in times of yore.

In this Mangadu the Goddess Sri Kamakshi came and started her penance standing on the PANCHAGNI in the midst of forest of Mango trees. Then Lord Siva appeared before Goddess Kamakshi and married her at Kancheepuram. In the same way, if any unmarried Girl, comes and offers vows to Sri Kamakshi, she gets married very soon.

Link : www.mangadukamakshi.tnhrce.in

Arulmigu Subramanya Swamy Temple, Tiruthani

This temple is one among the six Padaiveedu's of Lord Muruga. ie. the 5th Padaiveedu..Thai Poosam and Panguni Uthiram festivals are very famous festivals and large number of devotees coming here at that time.Tiruttani constitutes one of the six Padai Veedu shrines of Skanda (Lord Subramanya), and it represents the site where Subramanya stayed after destroying the demon Surapadman. Tiruttani is said to be the place where the Lord Subramanya married Valli - one of his two consorts.

The other five are; Palani (100 km west of Madurai),Swamimalai (150 km east of Madurai),Tirupparangunram(5 km from Madurai),Pazhamudircholai (10 km north of Madurai) and Thiruchendur (100 km south of Madurai).

Link : www.tirutanigaimurugan.tnhrce.in

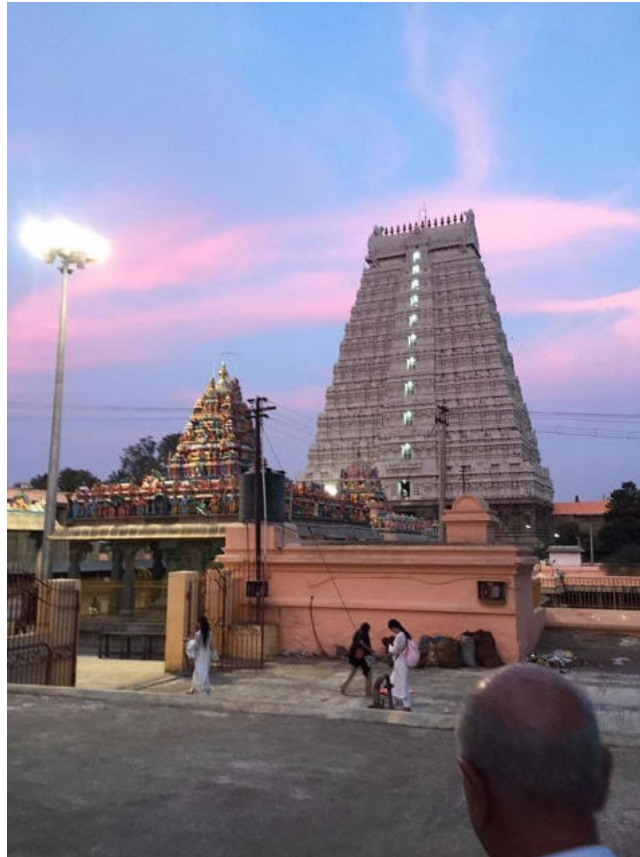
Arulmigu Thiruverkadukarumari Temple, Thiruperumputhur

One of the sportive arts of Devikarumari. One day Devikarumari took the image of old nomadic lady and went to Sun to forecast his future. Without realising her as Devikarumari, He simply neglected her. Devikarumari immediately vanished. Sun has lost it's brightness and its glory started declining. Realising his mistake He begged Devikarumari to forgive and excuse him. Sun also requested Devikarumari to celebrate Sunday as the day of Devikarumari. Devikarumari also accepted it. He also got permission from Her to pour on her sun rays twice in a year in the month of Panguni and Purattasi. So Sunday is celebrated as the day of Karumari . We can happily witness the scene of sun rays falling on the head of Devikarumari twice in a year. Devikarumari made Narayanan Seat there.

Link : www.thiruverkadukarumari.tnhrce.in

Ref: tripadvisor.in

Photos:





திருவள்ளூர் அருணாசலேஸ்வரர் திருக்கோயில்
திருவண்ணாமலை

பூஜை காலங்கள்

காலை 5.00 மணி	Opening Temple	Morning 5.00 a.m
காலை 5.15 மணி	Komatha Pooja	Morning 5.15 a.m
5.30 மணி	Palli Ezhuchi Pooja	5.30 a.m
6.00 மணி	Ushakala Pooja	6.00 a.m
8.30 மணி	Kalasanthi Pooja	8.30 a.m
11.00 மணி	Uchikala Pooja	11.00 a.m
நண்பகல் 12.30 மணி	Closing Temple	12.30 p.m
3.30 மணி	Opening Temple	3.30 p.m
மாலை 5.30 மணி	Sayaratchai Pooja	5.30 p.m
கிரவு 7.30 மணி	2 nd Kala Pooja	Night 7.30 p.m
9.00 மணி	Arthajama Pooja	9.00 p.m
9.15 மணி	Palliarai Pooja	9.15 p.m
9.30 மணி	Closing Temple	9.30 p.m

DAILY POOJA DETAILS

பூ : திருவிழா, பெளர்ணமி நாட்களில் பூஜை காலங்கள் மாறுதலுக்கு உட்பட்டது.

உங்களுக்கு நன்கொடையை இந்தியன் வங்கி கணக்கு எண் 6283896859ல்
டெபிட் மற்றும் கிரடிட் கார்டு மூலம் செலுத்தலாம்.
இறைபணியில் என்றும் இந்தியன் வங்கி









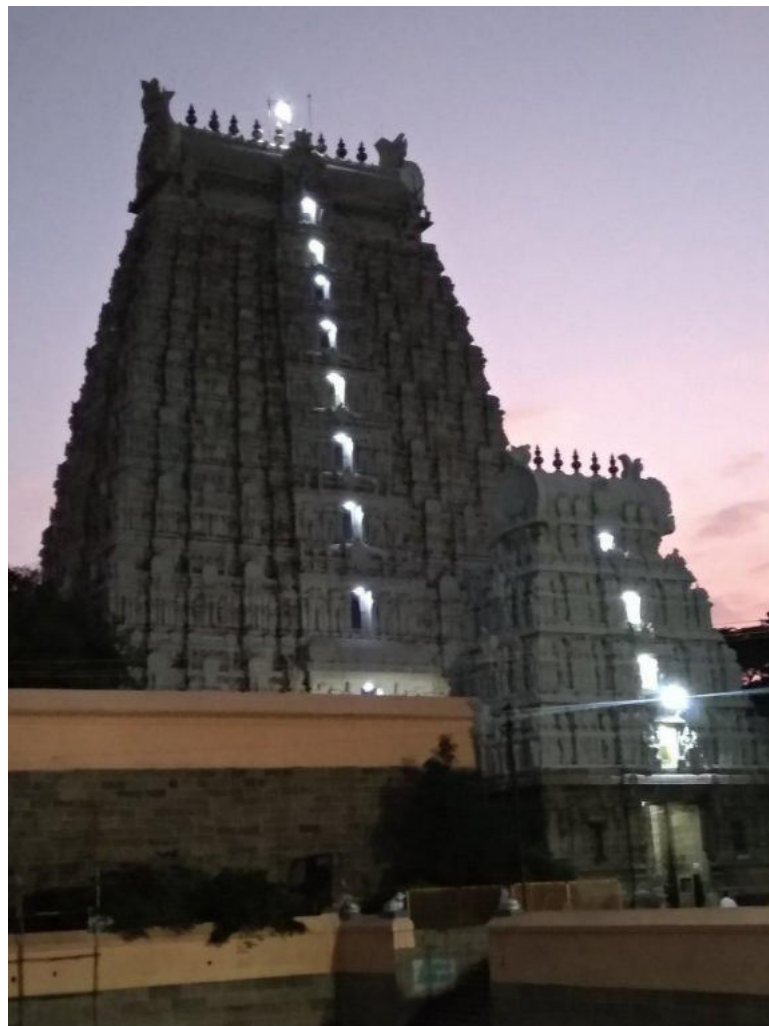


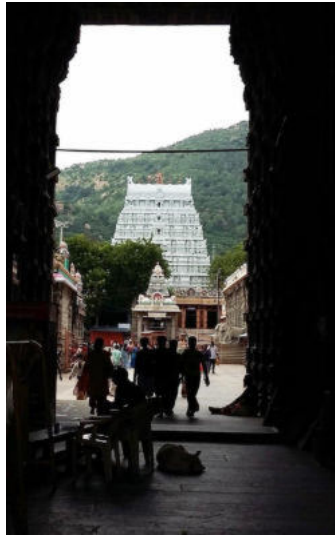


















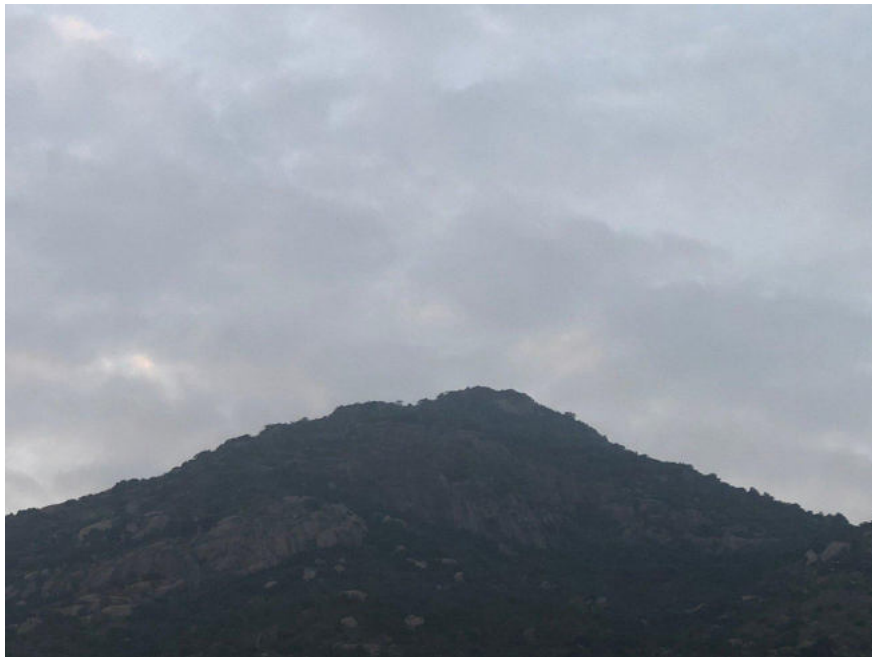








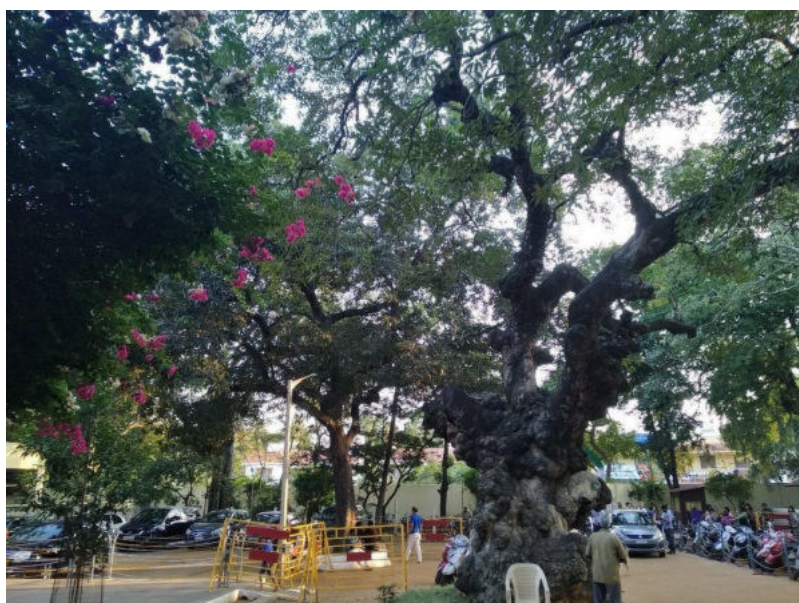


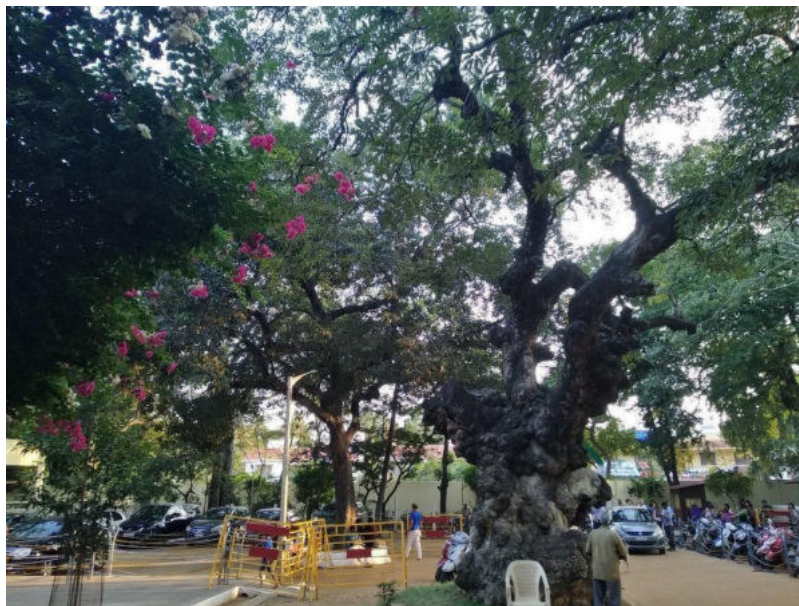


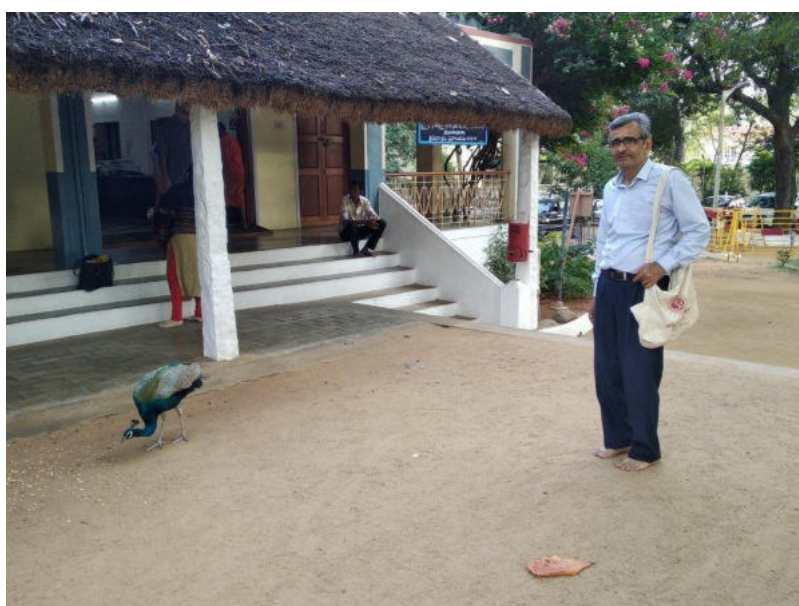
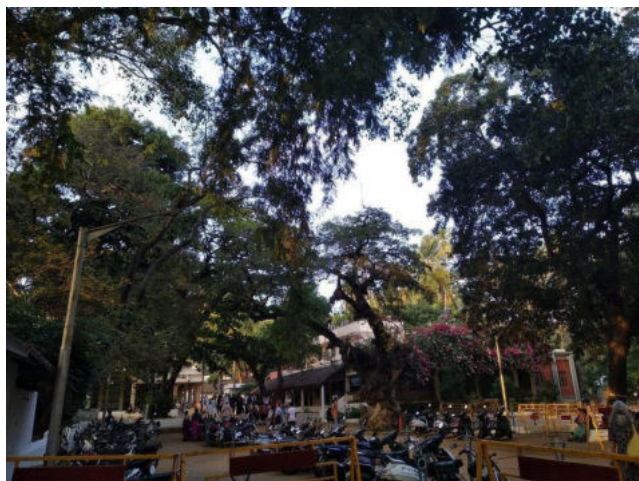


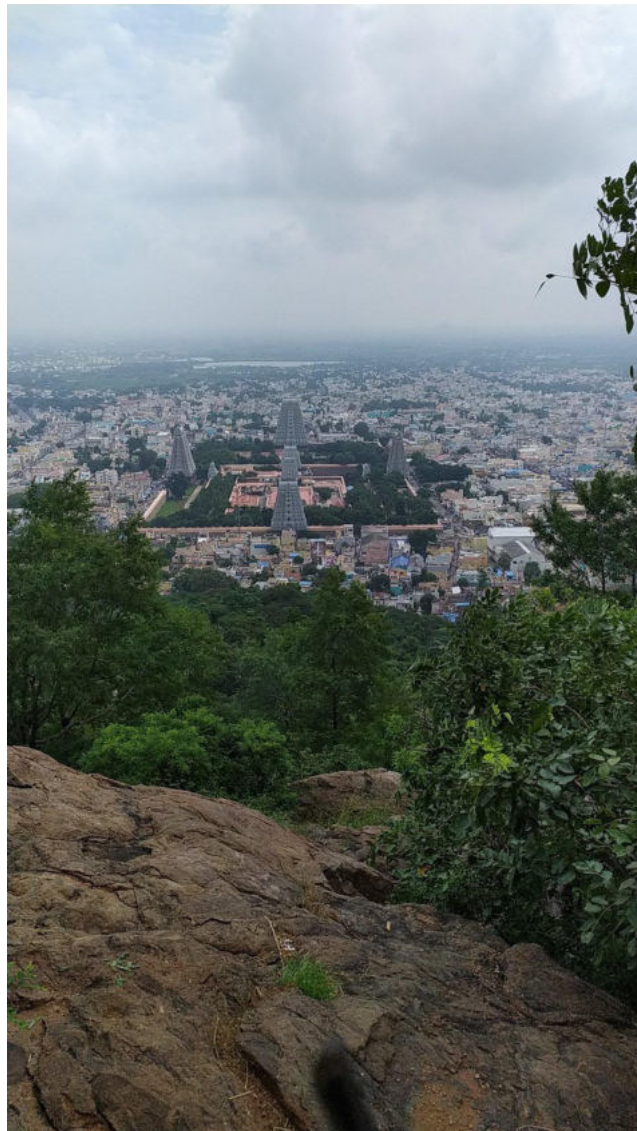
Photos: Sri Ramanashramam:











**Videos:**

Arunachaleswarar temple: <https://youtu.be/k7cj-BHs6Vg>

Arunachaleswzra temple: <https://youtu.be/GCpbN0QutBw>

Arunachaleswarar darshanam: <https://youtu.be/swlHeNnlhvl>

Arunachaleswarar temple: https://youtu.be/jr_8QhOz8mo

Annamalaiyar pooja: <https://youtu.be/TO2M0Y0TcM4>

Temple Rajagopuram: <https://youtu.be/CaDZUR3rbsY>

Arunachaleswarar: https://fb.watch/8w1hUbB_9l/

Pournami Girivalam (2018): <https://youtu.be/fxB57GQOjBg>

Pournami Girivalam (2019): <https://youtu.be/-HC21CJEvuc>

Arunachaleswarar pooja: <https://youtu.be/tVDWBWPdG0k>

Videos of chanting of stotras composed by Sri Ramana Maharshi:

Arunachala Shiva chant: <https://youtu.be/teX0Dn0clzg>

Arunachala Ashtakam: <https://youtu.be/oGbcCo5EWvY>

Arunachala Pancharatnam: <https://youtu.be/Qldr7xgFSJU>

Arunachala Akshara manimalai: <https://youtu.be/tzb5ylyTalw>

Upadesha saaram: <https://youtu.be/hiajdHlKric>

Arunachala Pancharatnam: <https://youtu.be/ACnm67tqEDE>

Arunachala Akshara manimalai with English translation: <https://youtu.be/iHGS-5SgZ2w>

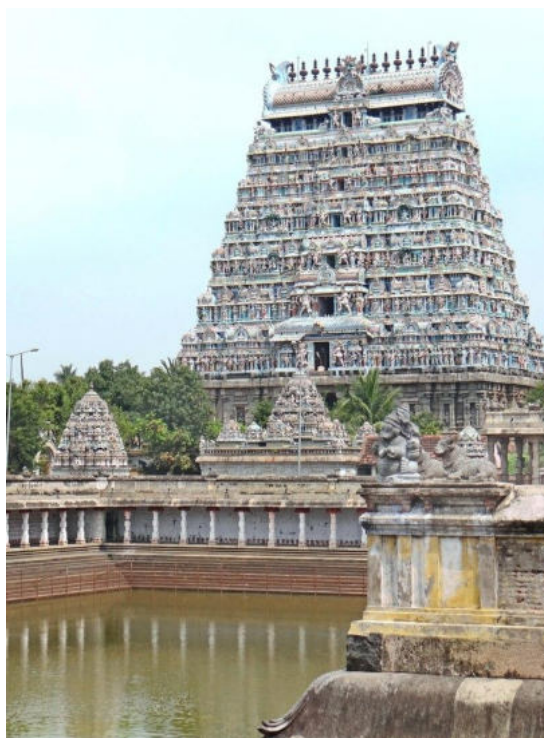
68th Aradhana of Sri Ramana Maharshi: <https://youtu.be/ORDImrOVC0U>

**Panchabhoota Sthalams-
Five Shiva temples representing five elements of Nature**

5. Sri Nataraja temple, Chidambaram, T. N.

Compiled by: M. Thirumaleshwar

Email: tmuliya@rediffmail.com



Ref: Wikipedia

Nataraja Temple, Chidambaram

Nataraja Temple, also referred to as the Chidambaram Nataraja temple or Thillai Nataraja temple, is a Hindu temple dedicated to Nataraja – Shiva as the lord of dance – in Chidambaram, Tamil Nadu, India.[4][5][6] The temple has ancient roots and a Shiva shrine existed at the site when the town was known as Thillai.[5][7] Chidambaram, the name of the city and the temple literally means "atmosphere of wisdom" or "clothed in thought", the temple architecture symbolizes the connection between the arts and spirituality, creative activity and the divine.[4][8][9] The temple wall carvings display all the 108 karanas from the Natya Shastra by Bharata Muni, and these postures form a foundation of Bharatanatyam, a classical Indian dance.[4][5]

The present temple was built in the 10th century when Chidambaram was the capital of the Chola dynasty, making it one of the oldest surviving active temple complexes in South India. After its 10th-century consecration by the Cholas who considered Nataraja as their family deity,[10] the temple has been damaged, repaired, renovated and expanded through the 2nd millennium. Most of the temple's surviving plan, architecture and structure is from the late 12th and early 13th centuries, with later additions in similar style.[11] While Shiva as Nataraja is the primary deity of the temple, it reverentially presents major themes from Shaktism, Vaishnavism, and other traditions of Hinduism. The Chidambaram temple complex, for example, has the earliest known Amman or Devi temple in South India, a pre-13th-century Surya shrine with chariot, shrines for Ganesha, Murugan and Vishnu, one of the earliest known Shiva Ganga sacred pool, large mandapas for the convenience of pilgrims (choultry, ambalam or sabha) and other monuments.[6][12] Shiva himself is presented as the Nataraja performing the Ananda Tandava ("Dance of Delight") in the golden hall of the shrine Pon Ambalam.[13]

The temple is one of the five elemental lingas in the Shaivism pilgrimage tradition, and considered the subtlest of all Shiva temples (Kovil) in Hinduism.[4] It is also a site for performance arts, including the annual Natyanjali dance festival on Maha Shivaratri.

Etymology

Chidambaram is one of the many temple towns in the state which is named after the groves, clusters or forests dominated by a particular variety of a tree or shrub and the same variety of tree or shrub sheltering the presiding deity.[15] The town used to be called Thillai, following Thillaivanam, derived from the mangrove of Tillai trees (*Exocoeria agallocha*) that grow here and the nearby Pichavaram wetlands.[16][17]

The site became the capital of Cholas in the 10th century, and they renamed it to Chidambaram and built the current temple for their family deity of Nataraja Shiva. The word Chidambaram comes from the Tamil word Chitrambalam (also spelled Chithambalam) meaning "wisdom atmosphere". The roots are citt or chitthu means "consciousness or wisdom", while and ampalam means "atmosphere".[9][18] This composite word comes from its association with Shiva Nataraja, the cosmic dancer and the cultural atmosphere for

arts.[9] The word Chidambaram is translated by James Lochtefeld as "clothed in thought".[4][19]

The town and temple name appears in medieval Hindu texts by various additional names such as Kovil (lit. "the temple"), Pundarikapuram, Vyagrapuram, Sirrampuram, Puliur and Chitrakuta.[20] Additional names for Chidambaram in Pallava era and North Indian texts include Kanagasabainathar, Ponnambalam, Brahmastpuri and Brahmapuri.[21]

Location

The Nataraja temple in Chidambaram is located in the southeastern Indian state of Tamil Nadu. It is about 5 kilometres (3.1 mi) north of the Kollidam River (Kaveri), 15 kilometres (9.3 mi) west from the coast of Bay of Bengal, and 220 kilometres (140 mi) south of Chennai. The closest major airport is about 60 kilometres (37 mi) north in Pondicherry (IATA: PNY). The National Highway 32 (old numbering: NH-45A) passes through Chidambaram. The Tamil Nadu State Transport Corporation and private companies operate services connecting it to major cities in the state.[22] The site is linked to the Indian Railways with daily express trains to South Indian cities.[23]

Chidambaram is a temple town, with the Nataraja complex spread over 40 acres (0.16 km²) within a nearly square courtyard in the center. Its side roads are aligned to the east–west, north–south axis. It has double walls around its periphery with gardens. It has had entrance gateways on all four sides.[24]

History

Nataraja – Shiva as the cosmic dancer, inspired the 10th-century Chola kings to rebuild the Chidambaram temple with stone and gold. A silver Nataraja, not Shivalinga, is the principal icon in this temple.[25]

The Nataraja temple has ancient roots, likely following the temple architecture tradition that is found all over South India from at least the 5th century. Textual evidence, such as those of the Sangam tradition, suggest a temple existed here along with Madurai in ancient times,[7] but the town is not named Chidambaram in these pre-5th-century texts.[26] The earliest mention of "dancing god of Chidambaram" as Shiva is found in 6th- and early-7th-century texts by Appar and Sambadar.[26] The Suta Samhita embedded inside Sri Kanda Puranam and variously dated between 7th and 10th century mentions the Chidambaram dance. The surviving Nataraja temple has a structure that is traceable to the early Chola dynasty. Chidambaram was the early capital of this dynasty, and Shiva Nataraja was their family deity. The Chidambaram temple town remained important to the Cholas, albeit with increasing competition from other temple towns when Rajaraja Chola I moved the capital to Thanjavur, built a new city and the massive Brihadeeswarar Temple dedicated to Shiva in the early 11th century, which is now a world heritage site.[7][27][28]

Nataraja Shiva and his "dance of bliss" is an ancient Hindu art concept. It is found in various texts such as Tatva Nidhi which describes seven types of dance and their spiritual symbolism, Kashyapa Silpa which describes 18 dance forms with iconographic details and design instructions, as well as Bharata's ancient treatise on performance arts Natya Shastra which describes 108 dance postures among other things. Reliefs and sculptures of Nataraja

have been found across the Indian subcontinent, some dating to the 6th century and earlier such as in Aihole and Badami cave temples.[29][30][note 1]

The Chidambaram temple built on this heritage,[citation needed] yet creatively evolved the idea into forms not found elsewhere. The earliest historically verifiable Shiva temple at Chidambaram is traceable in inscriptions that date to the rule of Aditya Chola I in the early 10th century, and far more during the rule of the 10th-century Chola king Parantaka I.[10][1][note 2] For them, the dancing Shiva was the kula-nayaka (family guide or deity) and Chidambaram was the capital they built.[33] These inscriptions and texts from this period suggest that the significance of the Agama texts and Shaiva Bhakti movement was strengthening within the Chola leadership and thought.[1]

The copper plate inscriptions of Parantaka I (c. 907-955 CE) describe him as the "bee at the lotus feet of Shiva" who built the golden house for Shiva, with Chit-sabha, Hema-sabha, Hiranya-sabha and Kanaka-sabha (all mandapam, pillared pilgrim rest places). He is referred to as "Pon veinda Perumal", which means "one who covered with gold" the Chit-sabha of Chidambaram.[34] Both Aditya I and his Chola successor Parantaka I were active supporters of arts and temple building. They converted many older brick and wooden temples into more lasting temples from cut stone as the building blocks in dozens of places across South India.[35]

Raja Raja Chola I (985-1013 CE) embarked on a mission to recover the hymns of the 63 Nayanmars after hearing short excerpts of the Tevaram in his court.[36] He sought the help of Nambiyandar Nambi, who was a priest in a temple.[37] It is believed that by divine intervention Nambi found the presence of scripts, in the form of cadijam leaves half eaten by white ants in a chamber inside the second precinct in Thillai Nataraja Temple, Chidambaram.[36][37] The brahmanas (Dikshitaras) in the temple are supposed to have disagreed with the king by saying that the works were too divine, and that only by the arrival of the "Naalvar" (the four saints)—Appar, Sundarar, Tirugnanasambandar and Manickavasagar would they allow for the chambers to be opened. Rajaraja, however, created idols of them and prepared for them to be brought to the temple through a procession. but Rajaraja is said to have prevailed.[36][38] Rajaraja thus became known as Tirumurai Kanda Cholan meaning one who saved the Tirumurai.[38]

In another version of the story, Rajaraja is said to have experienced a dream from lord Shiva telling Rajaraja that the hymns in Thillai Nataraja Temple, Chidambaram are in a state of destruction and to recover the remaining hymns from the chambers. The brahmanas (Dikshitaras) in the temple, however, are supposed to have disagreed with the king by saying that the works were too divine to be accessed, and that only by the arrival of the 63 Nayanmars would they allow for the chambers to be opened. Rajaraja, devising a plan, consecrated idols of each of them and prepared for them to be brought into the temple through a procession. It is said that the 63 idols are still present in the Thillai Nataraja Temple. When the vault was opened, Rajaraja is said to have found the room infested with white ants, and that the hymns were salvaged as much as possible.[citation needed]

The temple, according to inscriptions found in South India and Southeast Asia, was also historic recipient of a precious jewel from the king of Angkor who built the Angkor Wat

through Chola king Kulothunga, who submitted it to the temple in 1114 CE.[39] Kulothunga I and his son expanded the Chidambaram Nataraja temple expanse sixfold.[40]

Chidambaram temple thrived during the Chola dynasty rule through mid 13th century, along with the later Shiva-based Thanjavur and Gangaikondacholapuram capitals, as well as Vishnu-based Srirangam temple towns. Its facilities infrastructure was expanded. Naralokaviran, the general of king Kulothunga Chola I was responsible for building the steps that lead to Sivaganga water pool, a goddess shrine, a shrine for child saint Thirugnana Sambanthar, temple gardens and a pilgrim road network in and around Chidambaram. He constructed a hall for recitation of Tevaram hymns and engraved the hymns in copper plates.[41] The thousand pillar choultry, with friezes narrating Hindu texts, was built in the late 12th century.[41] Between the second half of the 12th century and the early 13th century, the Chola kings added colorful and high gopura stone gateways as easily identifiable landmarks, starting with the western gopura. Thereafter, about mid 13th century, the Pandya dynasty ended the Chola dynasty.[42] The Hindu Pandyas were liberal supporters of Chidambaram temple, along with other Shiva and Vishnu temples, just like the Chola. Sundara Pandya added the huge eastern gopura at Chidambaram, beginning the colossal gateway tradition.[42] Most of the structure and plans currently seen in the Chidambaram complex, including the mandapas with their pillar carvings, the various shrines with polished granite sculptures, the sacred water pool and the early gopurams are from the 12th and 13th century, attributed to the late Chola and early Pandya kings.[43]

Invasions



Subrahmanya shrine in ruins, early 19th century



A Mandapam in 1869



One of the temple's pillared halls before demolition in the late 19th century.

In the north, the Indian subcontinent had been conquered by the Delhi Sultanate. Muslim armies had begun raiding central India for plunder by the late 13th century. In 1311, the Ala ud Din Khilji's Muslim general Malik Kafur and his Delhi Sultanate forces went deeper into the Indian peninsula for loot and to establish annual tribute paying Muslim governors.[44] The records left by the court historians of the Delhi Sultanate state that Malik Kafur raided Chidambaram, Srirangam and other Tamil towns, destroyed the temples, and the Chidambaram Shiva temple was one of the sources of gold and jewels booty he brought back to Delhi.[45][46][47]

The temple towns of Tamil Nadu were again targeted for loot in the 1320s. However, when the news of another invasion spread in Tamil lands, the community removed them into the Western Ghats or buried numerous sculptures and treasures in the land and concealed chambers underneath temples sites before the Muslim armies reached them. A large number of these were rediscovered in archaeological excavations at the site in and after 1979, including those in Chidambaram.[48][49][50] According to Nagaswamy, those who buried the temple artworks followed the Hindu Agama texts such as Marici Samhita and Vimanarcanakalpa that recommend ritually burying precious metal murtis as a means of protection when war and robbery is imminent. Over 200 such items have been recovered, including relevant hordes of copper plate inscriptions.[50]

The Islamic invasion in the 14th century, states George Michell – a professor and art historian of Indian architecture, brought an abrupt end to the patronage of Chidambaram and other temple towns.[51] The Delhi Sultan appointed a Muslim governor, who seceded within the few years from the Delhi Sultanate and began the Madurai Sultanate. This Sultanate sought tribute from the temple towns, instead of supporting them. The Muslim Madurai Sultanate was relatively short lived, with Hindu Vijayanagara Empire removing it in the late 14th century.[51] The Vijayanagara rulers restored, repaired and expanded the temple through the 16th century, along with many other regional temples. These kings themselves went on pilgrimage to Chidambaram, and gifted resources to strengthen its walls and infrastructure.[52]



An 1847 sketch of gopuram with ruined pillars, published by James Fergusson

The destruction of Vijayanagara Empire in the late 16th century by an alliance of Sultanates, followed within a few decades by entrance of Portuguese, French and British colonial interests brought geopolitical uncertainties to Chidambaram and other temple towns. The Portuguese were already a major Coromandel Coast trading group by the early 17th century, a region to which Chidambaram belonged.[53] The Portuguese began building forts, garrison and churches in Coromandel Coast region after the demise of Vijayanagara, triggering the intervention of the French and the British. By the mid-17th century, the temple complex was within the patronage of Nayakas, who repaired the temple and repainted the frescoes on mandapa ceilings. According to Michell, these restorations likely occurred about 1643 CE during the reign of Shrirangadeva Raya III.[54]

According to British reports, Chidambaram temple town had to bear the "brunt of several severe onslaughts" between the French and the British colonial forces several times particularly in the 18th century.[55]

Legend

The Chidambaram temple legend is contained in the 12th-century text Chidambaram-mahatmya. The central episode states that Shiva visits sages in the mythical Pine Forest in the form of a dancer accompanied by Mohini, none other than Vishnu in the avatar of a beautiful woman. Mohini triggers lustful interest of the sages, while Shiva performs Tandava dance that triggers the carnal interest of the wives of these sages. The sages ultimately realise how superficial their austerities have been. The episode becomes widely known. Two sages named Patanjali (also called Sessa-bodied in the south for his connection to Vishnu) and Vyaghrapada (also called Tiger-footed sage) want to see the repeat performance of this "dance of bliss" in the Thailai forest, Chidambaram. They set up a Shivalinga, pray, meditate and wait. Their asceticism impresses Shiva who appeared before them in Chidambaram and performed "the dance" against "the wall, in the blessed hall of consciousness". This is how this temple started, according to the mahatmya embedded in the Tamil Sthalapurana.[56] According to Kulke, the late medieval text

Chidambara Mahatmyam may reflect a process of Sanskritisation, where these North Indian named sages with Vedic links became incorporated into regional temple mythology.[26]

According to another Hindu legend, Mahalingaswamy at Thiruvidadaimarudur is the centre of all Shiva temples in the region and the Saptha Vighraha moorthis (seven prime consorts in all Shiva temples) are located at seven cardinal points around the temple, located in various parts of the state.[57][58] The seven deities are Nataraja in Chidambaram Nataraja Temple at Chidambaram, Chandikeswarar temple at Tirucheingalur, Vinayagar in Vellai Vinayagar Temple at Thiruvanchuzhi, Muruga in Swamimalai Murugan Temple at Swamimalai, Bhairava in Sattainathar Temple at Sirkali, Navagraha in Sooriyanar Temple at Suryanar Kovil, Dakshinamoorthy in Apatsahayesvarar Temple at Alangudi.[58] and Somaskanda in Thiyagarajar temple at Thiruvavarur.

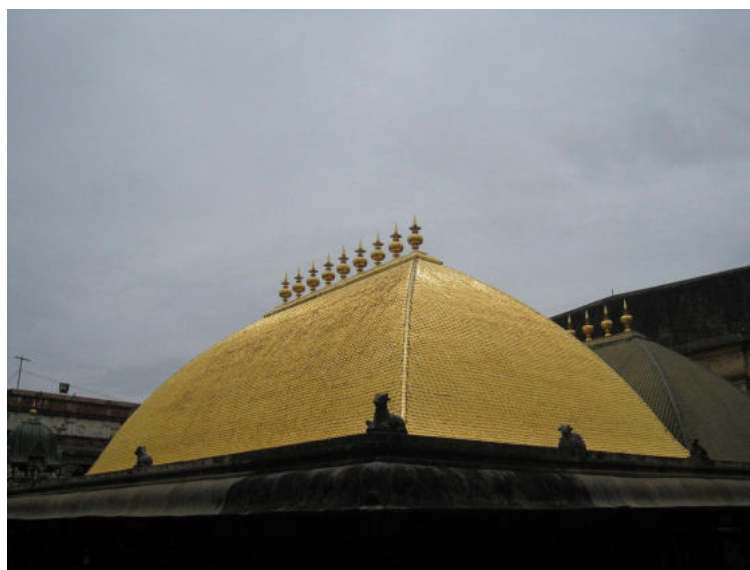
Nava Puliur Temples

This is one of the Nava Puliur Temples worshipped by Patanjali and Vyaghrapada.[59][60]

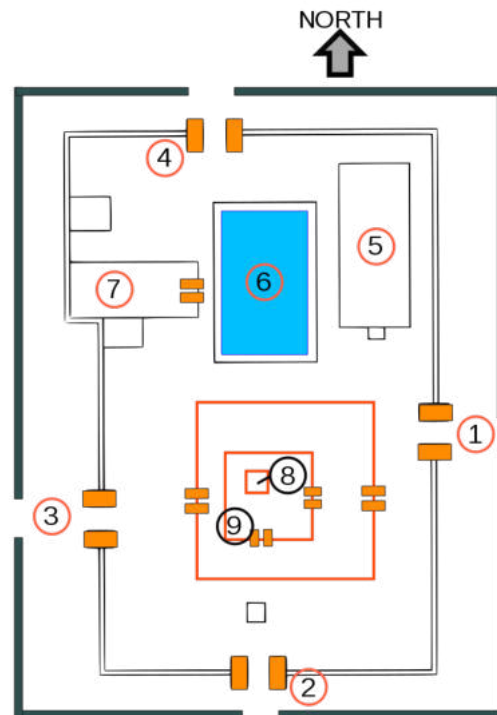
The following temples are called as Nava Puliur Temples:

- Perumpatrapuliyur
- Thirupathiripuliyur
- Erukathampuliyur
- Omampuliyur
- Sirupuliyur
- Atthippuliyur
- Thaplampuliyur
- Perumpuliyur
- Kanattampuliyur

Description



Golden Roof, Nataraja Temple in Chidambaram



Nataraja temple plan

1: East gopura; 2: South gopura; 3: West gopura; 4: North gopura; 5: 1000 pillar hall (choultry); 6: Shivaganga pool; 7: Devi temple; 8: Shiva Sanctum + Chit Sabha + Kanaka Sabha; 9: Vishnu shrine.

Architecture

The temple as it stands had a pre-Chola existence and the architecture is Dravidian with the Sanctum Sanctorum closely resembling Kerala or Malabar style structures. Indeed, the royal charters mention the rebuilding of the Sanctum using architects from Kerala.[61] However the golden roof is a striking example of Vesara architecture with its apsidal shape. Two small structures called the Chit Sabha and Kanak Sabha form the crux of the vast architectural complex.[62] The temple is spread over a 40-acre (16 ha) area, within layers of concentric courtyards. The inner sanctum, its connecting mandapams and pillared halls near it are all either squares or stacked squares or both. The complex has nine gopurams, several water storage structures of which the Shivaganga sacred pool is the largest with a rectangular plan. The temple complex is dedicated to Nataraja Shiva and theological ideas associated with Shaivism concepts in Hinduism. However, the temple also includes shrines for Devi, Vishnu, Subrahmanyar, Ganesha, Nandi and others including an Amman shrine, a Surya shrine complete with Chariot wheels.[62] The plan has numerous gathering halls called sabha, two major choultry called the 100 pillared and 1,000 pillared halls, inscriptions and frescoes narrating Hindu legends about gods, goddesses, saints and scholars.[63][64]

Courtyards

The Nataraja Temple complex is embedded inside four prakarams (prakamas, courtyards). Each of the courtyard has walls that were defensively fortified after the 14th-century plunder and destruction.



Courtyard, Nataraja Temple, Chidambaram

The outermost wall around the fourth courtyard has four simple, insignificant gateways. The walls and gateways of the fourth courtyard were added in the 16th century by Vijayanagara rulers after they had defeated the Madurai Sultanate, and this outermost layer was heavily fortified by the Nayakas in the 17th century.[65][66] These face the four large gopurams that are gateways into the third courtyard. These gopurams are also landmarks from afar. Inside the third courtyard, near the northern gopuram, is the Shivaganga tank, the thousand pillar mandapam, the Subrahmanyar (Murugan, Kartikeya) shrine and the shrine for Parvati (as Shivakama Sundari). The other three gateways are closer to the sanctum. The four gopurams pilgrims and visitors to enter the temple from all four cardinal directions. The complex is interconnected through a maze of pathways.[65][66]

The courtyard walls and gateways are made from cut stones with some brick structure added in. The gardens and palm groves are in the fourth courtyard, outside the walls of the third courtyard walls with the four large gopurams. These were restored or added in by the Vijayanagara rulers in the 16th century.[67]

Towers: gopurams



Two distinct styled gopurams of the Chidambaram temple. The artwork narrates religious and secular stories from Hindu texts.

The temple has nine major gopuram gateways connecting the various courtyards. Four of these are huge and colorful, visible from afar, a symbolic and convenient landmark for pilgrims. These gateway towers or gopurams each have 7 storeys facing the East, South, West and North.[65][66] The first edition of the four gopuram superstructures were likely built between 1150 and 1300 CE. The earliest was likely the western gopuram, which is also the smaller of the four. This is generally dated to about 1150 CE. The eastern gopura was likely completed by about 1200 CE, southern gopura by the mid-13th century, while the northern was added in the late 13th century. The four high gopurams were destroyed, rebuilt, repaired, enlarged and redecorated several times after the 13th century.[65][66] This has made the gopurams difficult to place chronologically, yet useful in scholarly studies of the history of the Nataraja temple.[68]

All gopuras are built of precisely cut large stone blocks all the way to the main cornice. Upon this is a stone, brick and plaster structure with layers of pavilions. Above these talas (storeys) is a Dravidian style barrel vaulted roof, crowned with thirteen kalasa finials. All four

are approximately similar in size and 14:10:3 ratio, about 42.7 metres (140 ft) high, 30.5 metres (100 ft) wide and 9.1 metres (30 ft) deep.[66]

Artwork on the gopuram



Nataraja Temple gopuram artwork in Chidambaram, Tamil Nadu



Sculpture in a wall at Nataraja Temple in Chidambaram, Tamil Nadu

Each gopuram is colorful and unique in its own ways. They narrate stories from various Hindu texts, showing religious and secular scenes from the various Hindu traditions. This art is presented in each gopuram with anthropomorphic figure panels and about fifty niches with stone sculptures in every gopuram.[65][66] The scenes include multiple panels about the legend of Shiva-Parvati wedding with Brahma, Vishnu, Saraswati and Lakshmi attending, dancing Ganesha, Shiva in his various aspects, Durga in the middle of her war with a demon, Skanda ready for war, seated Nandi, musicians, dancers, farmers, merchants, sadhu in namaste posture, dancing dvarapalas near the vertical center line and others. The artists and architects who built these gopura may have had a rationale in the relative sequence and position of the artwork with respect to each other and on various levels, but this is unclear and a subject of disagreement among scholars.[65][69][70]



The artwork on gopuram showing Parvati-Shiva Kalyanasundara wedding legend. Near the newly weds are Saraswati, Lakshmi, Vishnu and others.

The earliest built western gopuram is the only one with inscriptions below each artwork that identifies what it is. The artwork on it includes Durga fighting the evil, shape shifting buffalo demon and Skanda sitting on peacock and dressed up for war.[66] Other artwork found on the eastern gopuram include Surya, Ganapati, Vishnu, Sridevi (Lakshmi), Tripurasundari, Brahma, Saraswati, Varuna, Durga, Agni, several rishis, Yamuna goddess, Kama and Rati, Budha, the Vedic sages such as Narada and Agastya, Pantanjali, Somaskanda legend, Ardhanarishvara (half Shiva, half Parvati), Harihara (half Vishnu, half Shiva), several forms of dancing Shiva and others.[71]

The surviving south gopuram called the Sakkaseeyan Thirunilai Ezhugopuram was constructed by a Pandya king identified from the presence of the dynasty's fish emblem sculpted on the ceiling. The Pandyas sculpted two fishes facing each other when they completed gopurams (and left it with one fish, in case it was incomplete).[72] Other artwork found on the southern gopuram include Chandesha, Ganapati, Vishnu, Sridevi (Lakshmi), several Devis, Brahma, Saraswati, Surya, Chandra, Durga, Indra, Agni, several rishis,

Ganga and Yamuna goddesses, Kama and Rati, Budha, the Vedic sages such as Narada, Pantanjali, Somaskanda legend, Ardhanarishvara (half Shiva, half Parvati), Harihara (half Vishnu, half Shiva), several forms of dancing and standing Shiva such as Pashupata, Kiratarjuna and Lingobhava, as well as others.[71]

The eastern gopura wall shows all 108 dance postures from the Natya Shastra.[73] The other gopuras also have dance images.[74]

The eastern gopuram features the 108 reliefs of Natya Shastra dance postures (22 cm each in a separate niche) and faces the sanctum.[75][76] The eastern gopuram is credited to king Koperunsingan II (1243-1279 A.D.) as per epigraphical records[77] and was repaired with support from a woman named Subbammal in the late 18th century.

The northern gopuram was repaired and finished by the Vijayanagara king Krishnadevaraya (1509-1530 A.D.) in the 16th century.[41] The eastern and northern gopura also depicts the wide range of narratives as the southern and western gopuram.[71]

The idols of Pachiappa Mudaliar and his wife Iyalammal have been sculpted on the eastern gopuram. The Pachiappa Trust to date has been responsible for various functions in the temple and also maintain the temple car. The eastern gopuram is renowned for its complete enumeration of 108 poses of Indian classical dance – Bharathanatyam, detailed in small rectangular panels along the passage that leads to the gateway.

Shrines



The Chidambaram temple complex includes gopura, vimana and the sacred pool.

The temple complex has many shrines, most related to Shaivism but elements of Vaishnavism and Shaktism are included. The innermost structures such as the sanctum and the shrines all have square plans, but the gateways do not align except the innermost two courtyards.[65][66]

Shaivism

The sanctum of the temple is set inside the innermost 1st prakara which is a square with about 44 metres (144 ft) side. This prakara is offset towards the west inside the 2nd prakara, which is also a square with about 105 metres (344 ft) side.[65] The Shiva sanctum is unusual as it does not have a Shivalinga, rather it has the Chit Sabha (consciousness gathering, also called chit ambalam) with an image of Shiva Nataraja. This introspective empty space has a curtained space that is 3.5 meter long and 1.5 meter wide. It is called the rahasya (secret) in Hindu texts. It consists of two layers, one red, the other black. According to George Michell, this is a symbolism in Hinduism of "enlightenment inside, illusion outside". It is replaced on the tenth day of the main festivals.[78] The Chidambaram Rahasya is the "formless" representation of Shiva as the metaphysical Brahman in Hinduism, sometimes explained as akasha linga and divine being same as Self (Atman) that is everywhere, in everything, eternally.[79][80][81]

Facing the Chit Sabha is the Kanaka Sabha (also called pon ambalam), or the gathering of dancers. These two sanctum spaces are connected by five silver gilded steps called the panchakshara. The ceiling of the Chit Sabha is made of wooden pillars coated with gold, while copper coats the Kanaka Sabha is copper colored.[82]



Durga in the Shivakamasundari shrine, in her Mahishasuramardini form killing the buffalo demon below her foot.

Shaktism

The main Devi shrine in the Nataraja temple complex is offset towards the north of the sanctum inside the third prakara, and found to the west of the Shivaganga pool. It is called the Shivakamasundari shrine, dedicated to Parvati. The temple faces east and has an embedded square plan, though the stacked squares created a long rectangular space. The shrine has its own walls and an entrance gateway (gopura). Inside is the dedicated mandapas and brightly colored frescoes likely from the 17th-century Vijayanagara period.[83] These narrate the story of Shiva and Vishnu together challenging the "learned sages, ascetics and their wives" in the forest, by appearing in the form of a beautiful beggar that dances (bhikshatanamurti) and a beautiful girl that seduces (Mohini) respectively.

Another set of frescoes are secular depicting temple festivities and daily life of people, while a stretch narrates the story of Hindu saints named Manikkavachakar and Mukunda.[84][85]

The shrine had artwork narrating the Devi Mahatmya, a classic Sanskrit text of Shaktism tradition. However, in 1972, these were removed given their dilapidated state. These were replaced with a different story.[86] Other parts of the paintings and shrine also show great damage.[87]

The sanctum of the ShivaKamasundari shrine is dedicated to Devi, where she is Shiva's knowledge (jnana shakti), desire (iccha sakti), action (kriya sakti) and compassion (karuna sakti).[88] The oldest ShivaKamasundari sculpture at the site representing these aspects of the goddess has been dated to the king Parantaka I period, about 950 CE.[88]

Vaishnavism

The Nataraja temple complex incorporates Vaishnava themes and images like many Hindu temples in South India. A Vishnu shrine, for example, is found inside the sanctum of the temple in its southwest corner. According to George Michell and others, Chola kings revered Shiva with Tyagaraja and Nataraja their family deity, yet their urban Shaiva centers "echo a very strong substratum of Vaishnava traditions". This historic inclusiveness is reflected in Chidambaram with Vishnu Govindaraja in the same sanctum home by the side of Nataraja.[89] After the turmoil of the 14th century when the temple was attacked and looted, there was period when some priests sought to restore only Shaiva iconography according to extant Portuguese Jesuit records. However, the Vijayanagara rulers insisted on the re-consecration of all historic traditions.[90] The temple inscriptions confirm that Vishnu was included along with Shiva in the temple's earliest version, and was reinstalled when the temple was reopened by the Vijayanagara kings.[91][92]

Some texts from the time of king Kulottunga II give conflicting reports, wherein the Shaiva texts state that the king removed the Vishnu image while Vaishnava texts state that they took it away and installed it in Tirupati, sometime about 1135 CE. The scholar Vedanta Desika re-established the co-consecration in 1370 CE, about the time Vijayanagara Empire conquered Chidambaram and northern Tamil lands from the Madurai Sultanate.[91] The current shrine, states Michell, is from 1539 financed by king Achyutaraya and it features a reclining figure of Vishnu.[92]

The Govindaraja shrine is one of the 108 holy temples of Vishnu called divyadesam, revered by the 7th-to-9th-century saint poets of Vaishnava tradition, Alwars.[93] Kulashekhara Alwar mentions this temple as Tillai Chitrakutam and equates Chitrakuta of Ramayana fame with this shrine.[94] The shrine has close connections with the Govindaraja temple in Tirupati dating back to saint Ramanuja of the 11th and 12th centuries.[95][96]



The circumambulation paths in shrines, the mandapa's moulded plinth and the pilgrim hall pillars of the Nataraja temple are carved with reliefs showing dancers and musicians.

Others

The Nataraja temple has a pre-13th-century Surya shrine. The image is unusual as it depicts a three headed Surya same as Brahma, Shiva and Vishnu, with eight hands holding iconographic items of these deities, along with two lotuses in a pair of hands in front, accompanied by two small female figures possibly Usha and Pratyusha, standing on a chariot drawn by seven horses and Aruna as charioteer.[97][98] The temple also has a significant shrine for Ganesha in the southwest corner and a Subrahmanyar shrine in the northwest corner of the third courtyard.[6][12]

Halls: sabha

The temple has many halls called sabha (lit. "community gathering", also called ambalams or sabhai) inside the complex. Two of these are the Chit Sabha and the Kanaka Sabha inside the sanctum area of the Nataraja shrine, described earlier.[82] The other halls are:

Nritta sabha

Nrithya sabha (also called Nritta Sabha, Natya sabha, or "Hall of Dance") is a "so-called 56-pillared" hall. It is in the south section of the second courtyard that circumambulates the Nataraja sanctum of the complex. This second courtyard is near the temple's flag mast (kodi maram or dwaja sthambam). The 13th-century Nritta Sabha is traditionally considered as the place where Shiva and Kali originally entered into a dance competition.[99] Shiva won with the urdhva-tandava pose that raised his right leg straight up, a posture that Kali refused because she was a woman. The hall is rectangular consisting of three stacked squares, a 15-meter-sided square that is the main hall, which is connected to 4 meters by 8 meters rectangular mukha-mandapa to its north. The hall now has 50 pillars, but evidence suggests that it may have had 56 or more pillars earlier.[99] These pillars are intricately carved from

top to bottom. The lower levels have dancers in Natya Shastra mudras accompanied with expressive musicians as if both are enjoying creating the music and the dance. The pillars also have embedded narratives of legends from Hindu texts, such as of Durga fighting the buffalo demon, as well as humorous dwarfs frolicking. Below the kapota, the structures show reliefs of seated people, many in namaste posture, some with a beard and yogi like appearance representing saints and rishis. Nearly 200 of these are still visible, rest appear to have been damaged or eroded over time.[99][100]

The Nritta Sabha platform's base is carved as a chariot, with horses and wheels, as if it is rising out the ground. Historic texts state that the wheels were exquisitely carved and visible in the past, each about 1.25 meter diameter with 28 spokes and 33 medallions, the chariot had 1.55-meter-high (5.1 ft) ornamented horses, on the wheel was a seated rishi as if he was guiding the movement. Only remnants of this structure remains now.[101] The northern niche of the hall is carved with 14 figures in addition to Shiva as Kanakamurti. The Shiva image had been damaged and is now restored. The 14 figures include Surya (sun god), Chandra (moon god) and 12 rishis of which Narada and Tumburu with Vina can be identified, the others have been too damaged to identify but are likely Vedic rishis. Near them are women in seductive postures, some nudes, likely the wives of the rishis.[101] Next to the northern niche with Shiva are two smaller niches, one for Patanjali seated on coiled serpent and another for bald headed Vyaghrapada, the two mythical Chidambaram saints. The western wall also has a niche with a large Shiva image in his Vrisabhantika form. Once again rishis are with him, this time in namaste posture. A few figures are dressed royally like warriors and these may be representation of the Chola kings.[101][100]

The hall's center is an open square, with an ornate inverted lotus ceiling decoration.[102] Around this lotus are 108 coffers, each with two human figures in namaste posture, all oriented to be along the north–south axis likely to suggest the direction to performance artists who would perform live and aligning themselves to the chit sabha in the sanctum.[102]



Carved pillars in a temple hall.



The damaged 1,000 pillar hall.

Raja sabha: 1,000 pillar hall

Raja sabha or the 1000-pillared hall is to the east of the Shivaganga pool, in the northeast part of the third courtyard. A pillared pathway from the eastern gopuram leads to it. It was a

choultry for pilgrims with a convenient access to the pool. The hall's lower mouldings have dance mudras and medieval era musical instruments being played by musicians. The pillars have reliefs. It is now kept closed, except for festivals.

Shatasila sabha: 100 pillar hall

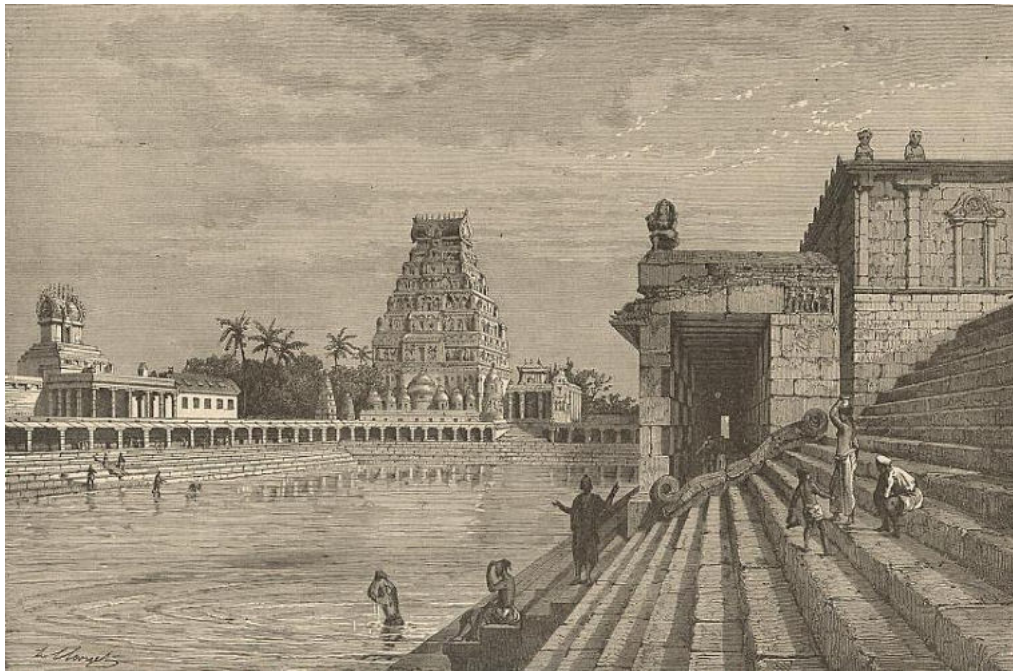
This is northwest of the sanctum, south of the Devi shrine. It is badly damaged and closed to public.

Deva sabha

Deva Sabhai is on the eastern side of the second courtyard. It is called Perampalam, literally "Great Hall" in the inscriptions, which suggests that it is an early structure and was historically important.[103] According to Nanda and Michell, this may be the hall where Shaiva bhakti saints Nayanars came and sang hymns. It may also have hosted royal visits during the Chola era times.[103]

The Deva sabha (divine gathering hall) houses the temple's revered collection of historic bronze sculptures and modern era frescoes. One of the paintings show Parvati seated in a chair, watching the Nrta sabha hall.[104]

Temple Tanks



Sacred pool sketched in the 1870s.



It is locally called the Sivaganga (சிவகங்கை).

The Chidambaram temple is well endowed with several water bodies within and around the temple complex.

Sivaganga tank[105] is in the third corridor of the temple opposite to the shrine of Shivagami. It is accessed by flights of stone steps leading from the shrine.[106]

Paramanandha koobham is the well on the eastern side of the Chitsabha hall from which water is drawn for sacred purposes.[107]



Temple Tank in Nataraja Temple, Chidambaram

Kuyya theertham is situated to the north-east of Chidambaram in Killai near the Bay of Bengal and has the shore called Pasamaruthanthurai.[107]

Pulimedu is situated around a kilometer and a half to the south of Chidambaram.[107]

Vyagrapatha Theertham is situated on to the west of the temple opposite to the temple of Ilamai Akkinaar.[107]

Anantha Theertham is situated to the west of the temple in front of the Anantheswarar temple.[107]

Nagaseri tank is situated to the west of the Anantha thirtham.[107]

Brahma Theertham is situated to the north-west of the temple at Thirukalaanjeri.[107]

Underground channels at the shrine drain excess water in a northeasterly direction to the Shivapriyai temple tank of the Thillai Kali Temple, Chidambaram. Due to poor maintenance, it has not been in use.[108]

Thiruparkadal is the tank to the south-east of the Shivapriyai tank.[107]

Inscriptions

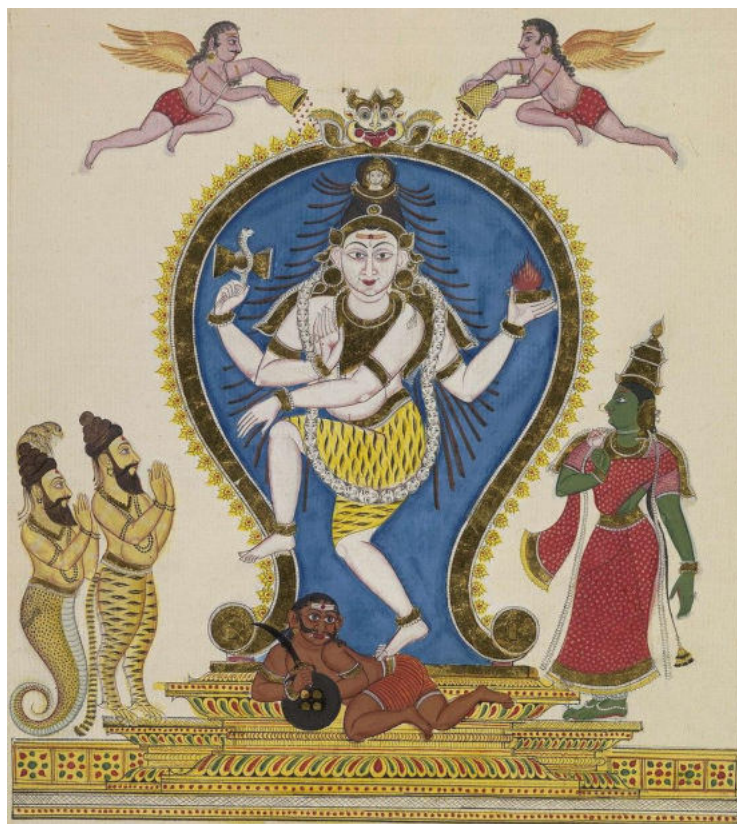
Even though the history of the temple goes back to the Prabhandas and Tevaram, that is the Pallava period, the earliest known inscriptions are only that of Rajendra Chola and Kulothunga I followed by Vikrama Chola and other later rulers.[109] The Nataraja temple inscriptions are notable for mentioning a library of manuscripts in temple premises.[110] Two inscriptions dated to the early 13th century mention re-organization of old temple library. According to Hartmut Scharfe, the older library mentioned may date to the early 12th century.[110] The inscriptions, states Scharfe, recite that the temple employed twenty librarians, of which eight copied old manuscripts to create new editions, two verified the copy matched the original and four managed the proper storage of the manuscripts.[110]

There are many Chola inscriptions in the temple, both in Tamil and Sanskrit.[111] These are attributed to Rajendra Chola I (1012-1044 CE), Kulothunga Chola I (1070-1120 CE), Vikrama Chola (1118-1135 CE), Rajadhiraja Chola II (1163 -1178 CE), Kulothunga Chola III (1178-1218 CE) and Rajaraja Chola III (1216-1256 CE).[109] Pandya inscriptions date from Thribhuvana Chakravarthi Veerapandiyan, Jataavarman Thribhuvana Chakravarthi Sundarapaandiyan (1251-1268 CE) and Maaravarman Thribhuvana Chakravarthi Veerakeralanaagiya Kulashekara Pandiyan (1268-1308 CE). Pallava inscriptions are available for king Avani Aala Pirandhaan Ko-pperum-Singha (1216-1242 CE). Vijayanagara Kings mentioned in inscriptions are Veeraprathaapa Kiruttina Theva Mahaaraayar (1509-1529 CE), Veeraprathaapa Venkata Deva Mahaaraayar, Sri Ranga Theva Mahaaraayar, Atchyutha Deva Mahaaraayar (1529-1542 CE) and Veera Bhooopathiraayar. One of the inscriptions from the descendant of Cheramaan Perumal nayanar, Ramavarma Maharaja has been found.

Temple Car



The temple car of Nataraja used during festival processions.



An 1820 painting of Nataraja in a temple chariot.

The Chidambaram temple car is used for processions twice a year, where it is drawn by several thousand devotees during the festivals.[112] There are five temple cars, with the biggest one for Lord Nataraja. The main deity in the sanctum sanctorum will be taken out on the procession, unlike the other temples where Utsava idols are generally taken out. The four feet idols of Lord Nataraja and Goddess Sivagamasundari, adorned with precious gem-studded jewellery and flowers, are taken out of the main sanctum amidst a grand number of devotees in a golden platform. Fifties of men hold the huge wooden log connected to the platform making a circumambulation around the Chitsaba, before being taken out to the temple car. After the procession across four car streets, the deities are taken in a similar fashion to the Rajasabha at night, where Laksharchana happens (chanting the 1000 names of Lord Nataraja by 100 priests; laksha - 1 lakh). The next day, before dawn, the deities are bathed with holy products. Unlike other temples, the holy bathing ritual goes for 4–5 hours which consists of several products like milk, holy ash, turmeric, curd, honey, rose water sugarcane juice, fruits, flowers, coconut water. For every Mahabisheka during Margazhi festival, Swarnabisheka is done (bath with golden coins). After abhisheka, Lord Nataraja and Goddess Sivagamasundari offers ROYAL DARSHAN to devotees in the Rajasabha (the royal hall). Around late afternoon, the deities are taken inside temple in a grandeur manner, which forms the prime Arudhra Darshan (Margazhi festival) or Uttra Darshan (Aani Thirumanjanam festival). These two annual festivals coincidence with Winter and Summer solstice (of Northern Hemisphere), respectively.

Significance of the architecture

The temple sanctum contains a silver sculpture of Shiva in his Ānanda-tāṇḍava Nataraja aspect. It signifies:

- The demon under Lord Nataraja's feet signifies that ignorance is under His feet.[113]
- The fire in His hand (power of destruction) means He is the destroyer of evil.[113]
- The raised hand (Abhaya or Pataka mudra) signifies that He is the savior of all life forms.[113]
- The arc of fire called Thiruvashi or Prabhavati signifies the cosmos and the perpetual motion of the earth.
- The drum in His hand signifies the origin of life forms.[113][114]
- The lotus pedestal signifies Om, the sound of the universe.
- His right eye, left eye and third eye signify the sun, moon and fire/knowledge, respectively.
- His right earring (makara kundalam) and left earring (sthri kundalam) signify the union of man and woman (right is man, left is woman).
- The crescent moon in His hair signifies benevolence and beauty.[113]
- The flowing of river Ganges through His matted hair signifies eternity of life.
- The dreading of His hair and drape signify the force of His dance.[113]

Bhakti movement

There is no reference to the temple in Sangam literature of the 1st to 5th centuries and the earliest mention is found in 6th-century Tamil literature.[115] The temple and the deity were immortalized in Tamil poetry in the works of Thevaram by three poet saints belonging to the 7th century - Thirugnana Sambanthar, Thirunavukkarasar and Sundaramoorthy

Nayanar.[116] Thirugnana Sambanthar has composed 2 songs in praise of the temple, Thirunavukkarasar aka Appar 8 Tevarams in praise of Nataraja and Sundarar 1 song in praise of Nataraja. Sundarar commences his Thiruthondar thogai (the sacred list of Lord Shiva's 63 devotees) paying his respects to the priests of the Thillai temple - "To the devotees of the priests at Thillai, I am a devotee". The works of the first three saints, Thirumurai were stored in palm leaf manuscripts in the temple and were recovered by the Chola King Rajaraja Chola[75] under the guidance of Nambiandarnambi.

Manikkavasagar, the 10th-century saivite poet has written two works, the first called Tiruvacakam (The sacred utterances) which largely has been sung in Chidambaram and the Thiruchitrabalakkovaiyar (aka Thirukovaiyar), which has been sung entirely in the temple. Manikkavasagar is said to have attained spiritual bliss at Chidambaram. The Chidambaram Mahatmyam composed during the 12th century explain the subsequent evolution and de-sanskritization.[115]

Rituals

A unique feature of this temple is the bejeweled image of Lord Nataraja as the main deity. It depicts Lord Shiva as the master of Koothu-Bharata Natyam and is one of the few temples where Lord Shiva is represented by an anthropomorphic murthi rather than the classic, aniconic Lingam.

At Chidambaram, the dancer dominates, not the linga as in other Shiva shrines. The Chitsabha houses a small spatik (crystal) linga (Chandramoulisvara), believed to be a piece that fell from the crescent adorning Lord Shiva's head and installed by Adi Shankara. Daily puja is offered to the spatik linga (six times) and also to a small emerald figure of Nataraja called Ratnasabhapati (once, at 10-30 am). The main sanctum also encloses Chidambara Rahasya - the divine chakra adorned with golden vilva leaves. This remains hidden and only during the pooja times (six times in a day), Rahasya Darshan will be offered to the devotees. Rahasya emanates the vastness and formlessness of Akash, the divinity that is the highest form of Supremacy (ether form of five elements).

Festivals

A whole year for men is said to be a single day for the gods. Just as six poojas are performed in a day at the sanctum sanctorum, six anointing ceremonies are performed for the principal deity - Nataraja in a year. They are the Marghazhi Thiruvaadhirai (in December - January) indicating the first puja, the fourteenth day after the new moon (Chaturdashi) of the month of Masi (February - March) indicating the second pooja, the Chittirai Thiruvonam (in April- May), indicating the third pooja or uchikalam, the Uthiram of Aani (June-July) also called the Aani Thirumanjanam indicating the evening or the fourth puja, the chaturdasi of Aavani (August - September) indicating the fifth puja and the chaturdasi of the month of Puratasi (October - November) indicating the sixth pooja or Arthajama. Of these the Marghazhi Thiruvaadhirai (in December - January) and the Aani Thirumanjanam (in June - July) are the most important. These are conducted as the key festivals with the main deity being brought outside the sanctum sanctorum in a procession that included a temple car procession followed by a long anointing ceremony.[117] Several hundreds of thousands of people flock the temple to see the anointing ceremony and the ritualistic dance of Shiva

when he is taken back to the sanctum sanctorum. Lord Shiva, in his incarnation of Nataraja, is believed to have born on full moon day in the constellation of Ardra, the sixth lunar mansion. Lord Shiva is bathed only 6 times a year, and on the previous night of Ardra, the bath rituals are performed on a grand scale.[118] Pots full of milk, pomegranate juices, coconut water, ghee, oil, sandal paste, curds, holy ashes, and other liquids and solids, considered as sacred offering to the deity are used for the sacred ablution.[118]

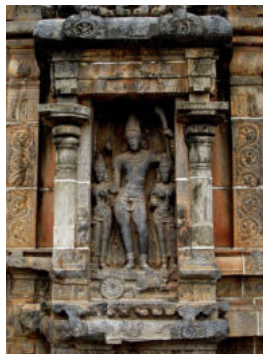


Natyanjali Festival in the temple

Administration

The temple is administered by an exclusive group of Brahmins who are learned in the Vedas and Yagnas (sacrifices) called Dikshitaras. The entire community of Dikshitaras live in Chidambaram and also serve as the hereditary trustees of the temple. They are also called Thillai Muvayiravar or the Three Thousand of Thillai[119] Every Dikshitar once he is married becomes as of right a trustee and archaka of the temple. A practice unique to the community is that the priests wear the tuft of hair in front of the head similar to the Nambuthiri Brahmins of Kerala.

Gallery:



Rama, Sita, Lakshmana



Vishnu seated on Garuda



Dilapidated sculpture



Thousand pillared Hall

Ref: cuddalore.nic.in

The Nataraj Temple Chidambaram is also referred as Thillai Nataraj Temple. This temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva. It is in the southern state of Tamilnadu in India. The temple has a deep mythical connection. When the name of the town was Thillai, a Shiva shrine used to be there in the temple. Chidambaram is the name of the city where the temple is now situated literally meaning “clothed in thought” or “atmosphere of wisdom”.

The architecture of the temple represents the link between arts and spirituality. The temple was constructed during the 10th Century when Chidambaram used to be the capital of the Chola dynasty. The Cholas considered Lord Shiva as Nataraj as their family deity. The Nataraj temple has undergone damage, renovation and expansion throughout the 2nd millennium. Although Shiva is the main deity of the temple, it also represents major themes from Vaishnavism, Shaktism and others with all due reverence. The Chidambaram temple complex proudly boasts of being one of the oldest temple complexes in Southern India. The most unique characteristic of the Nataraj Temple is the bejewelled image of Nataraj.

The temple has five main Halls or Sabhas namely the Kanaka Sabha, the Cit Sabha, Nritta Sabha, Deva Sabha and Raja Sabha. Nataraj happens to be one of the most momentous forms of Lord Shiva. Chidambaram is also amongst one of the most celebrated shrines of Lord Shiva in the country. The place also bears a significant importance from both cultural point of view and historical perspective as well. Now R & D, Western scientists have proved that at Lord Nataraja 's big toe is the Centre Point of World 's Magnetic Equator.

Ancient Tamil Scholar Thirumoolar has proved this Five thousand years ago! His treatise Thirumandiram is a wonderful Scientific guide for the whole world.

Chidambaram temple embodies the following characteristics :

- This temple is located at the Center Point of world 's Magnetic Equator.
- among the "Pancha bootha" temples, Chidambaram denotes the Skies. Kalahasthi denotes Wind. Kanchi Ekambareswar denotes land. All these 3 temples are located in a straight line at 79 degrees 41 minutes Longitude. This can be verified. An amazing fact & astronomical miracle !
- Chidambaram temple is based on the Human having 9 Entrances denoting 9 Entrances or Openings of the body.
- Temple roof is made of 21600 gold sheets which denotes the 21600 breaths taken by a human being every day ($15 \times 60 \times 24 = 21600$)
- These 21600 gold sheets are fixed on the "Vimanam" (Roof) using 72000 gold nails which denote the total no. of Nadis (Nerves) in the human body.
- Thirumoolar states that man represents the shape of Shivalingam, which represents Chidambaram which represents Sadashivam which represents Lord SHIVA's dance!
- "Ponnambalam " is placed slightly tilted towards the left. This represents our Heart. To reach this, we need to climb 5 steps called "Panchatshara padi " "Si, Va, Ya, Na, Ma " are the 5 Panchatshara mantras. There are 4 pillars holding the Kanagasabha representing the 4 Vedas.
- Ponnambalam has 28 pillars denoting the 28 "Ahamas "as well as the 28 methods to worship Lord Shiva. These 28 pillars support 64 +64 Roof Beams which denote the 64 Arts. The cross beams represent the Blood Vessels running across the Human body.
- Kalasas on the Golden Roof represent the 9 types of Sakthi or Energies. The 6 pillars at the Artha Mantapa represent the 6 types of Sashtas.
- The 18 pillars in the adjacent Mantapa represents 18 Puranams.
- The dance of Lord Nataraja is described as Cosmic Dance by Western Scientists.

Quite a number of legends are associated with that of the Chidambaram Nataraj Temple. A couple of annual festivals and traditions that are celebrated with utmost grandeur and pomp are Aani Tirumanjanam and Margazhi Tiruvaadirai.

How to Reach:

By Air

The nearest airport is at Chennai, 250 kms. From Cuddalore on road 50KM, Air : The nearest International airports is Chennai (200Km). Another nearest Air Port is in Pondicherry has charter flights located 25KM from Cuddalore. New Airport also prosed and the work is in progress, At Neyveli in the same District located 45Km from Cuddalore Town the head quarters of this District.

By Train

State head quarters Chennai to Villupuram , Cuddalore, Chidambaram. Rail : 1. Chennai – Villupuram – Cuddalore – Thanjavoor – Trichy Railways route is available running via Cuddalore Town the District head quarters. 2. Another major rail route is also available in this District is Chennai -Villupuram – Vridhachalam – Trichy . It is also operational, In which Vridhachalam is loacted 50KM from Cuddalore Town. There is connecting rail route is also available between Cuddalore and Vridhachalam.

By Road

State head quarters Chennai to Puducherry (Pondycherry) via ECR or Chengalpattu Dindivanam, then Cuddalore, Chidambaram. Road : Road transport is very good in Cuddalore District. National highways NH45 , NH45A are running through Cuddalore. Satta Highways 32 & 36 are also running through Cuddalore District. On road Cuddalore is located 200Km From state head quarters.

Ref:chidambaramnataraja.org

Chidambaram Temple is a Hindu temple dedicated to Lord Shiva located in the heart of the temple town of Chidambaram,Tamil Nadu).The temple , 78 km south of Pondicherry and 235 Km from Chennai, the capital of Tamil Nadu state of southeastern India.

Darshan Time

Morning 6.00.a.m to 12.00 noon

Evening 5.00.p.m. to 10.00 night

ARDHAJAAMAM pooja starts at 9:00pm with abhishekam and ends at 10:00pm (Appro. Timings)

THE SIX MAHAABHISHEKAS OF SRI NATARAJARAJA

03.05.2021 Monday 6.00 p.m. CHITHIRAI ONAM @ Kanaka Sabhai

15.07.2021 Thursday 3.30 a.m. AANITHIRUMANJANAM @ RAJA SABHAI

21.08.2021 Saturday 6.00 p.m. AAVANI CHATHURDHASI @ Kanaka Sabhai

19.09.2021 Sunday 6.00 p.m. PURATTASI CHATHURDHASI @ Kanaka Sabhai

20.12.2021 Monday 3.30 a.m. AARDHRAA ABHISHEKAM @ RAJA SABHAI

15.02.2022 Tuesday 6.00 a.m. MAASI CHATHURDHASI @ Kanaka Sabhai



About the temple:

Chidambaram Temple is a Hindu temple dedicated to Lord Shiva located in the heart of the temple town of Chidambaram, Tamil Nadu). The temple, 78 km south of Pondicherry and 235 Km from Chennai, the capital of Tamil Nadu state of southeastern India. The Sangam classics refer to Viduvelvidugu Perumtaccan, respected clan of traditional Vishwakarmas, as being the chief architect of the temple renovation. There have been several renovations in its history, particularly during the days of Pallava/Chola emperors in ancient and pre-medieval periods.

Chidambaram is one of the five holiest Shiva temples, each representing one of the five natural elements; Chidambaram represents akasha (aether). The other four temples in this category are: Thiruvanaikaval Jambukeswara, Trichy (water), Kanchi Ekambareswara (earth) Kanchipuram, Thiruvannamalai Arunachaleswara (fire), Thiruvanna malai and Kalahasti Nathar (wind), Kalahasti

Temple

The temple complex spread over 50 acres in the heart of the city. It is an ancient and historic temple dedicated to Lord Shiva Nataraja and Lord Govindaraja Perumal, one of the few temples where both the Shaivite and Vaishnavite deities are enshrined in one place. To the followers of Shaivism (Saivism) or the saivaite, the very word koil refers to Chidambaram. In the same way, to the followers of Vaishnavism it refers to Srirangam or Thiruvaramangam.



(Meaning of Chidambaram)

The word Chidambaram may be derived from chit, meaning "consciousness", and ambaram, meaning "sky" (from aakasam or aakayam); it refers to the chidaakasam, the sky of

consciousness, which is the ultimate aim one should attain according to all the Vedas and scriptures. Another theory is that it is derived from chit + ambalam. Ambalam means a "stage" for performing arts. The chidakasam is the state of supreme bliss or aananda and Lord Natarajar is the symbolic representation of the supreme bliss or aananda natanam. Saivaites believe that a visit to Chidambaram leads to liberation. Yet another theory is that it is derived from the word chitrambalam, from chithu meaning "play or dances of God" and ambalam meaning "stage"

Special features

A unique feature of this temple is the bejeweled image of Nataraja. It depicts the Lord Shiva as the Lord of the dance Bharatanatyam and is one of the few temples where Shiva is represented by an anthropomorphic murthi rather than the classic, anionic Lingam. The Cosmic Dance of Lord Nataraja symbolises the motion of the universe as sustained by Lord Shiva. The temple has five courts. Aragalur Udaya Iraratevan Ponparappinan (alias Vanakovaraiyan) rebuilt the Siva temple at Chidambaram around 1213 AD. The same Bana Chief also built Tiruvannamalai temple. The temple has been traditionally administered by an endogamous group of shiavite brahmins called Dikshitar, who also officiate as its priest.

Temple Story

The story of Chidambaram begins with the legend of Lord Shiva strolling into the Thillai Vanam (Vanam meaning forest and thillai trees - botanical name *Excoecaria agallocha*, a species of mangrove trees - which currently grows in the Pichavaram wetlands near Chidambaram. The temple sculptures depicting the Thillai trees date back to the 2nd century CE).

In the Thillai forests resided a group of saints or 'rishis' who believed in the supremacy of magic and that God can be controlled by rituals and 'mantras' or magical words. The Lord strolls in the forest with resplendent beauty and brilliance, assuming the form of 'Pitchatanadar', a simple mendicant seeking alms. He is followed by his Grace and consort who is Lord Vishnu as Mohini. The rishis and their wives are enchanted by the brilliance and the beauty of the handsome mendicant and his consort. On seeing their womenfolk enchanted, the rishis get enraged and invoke scores of 'serpents' (Sanskrit: *Nāga*) by performing magical rituals. The Lord as the mendicant lifts the serpents and dons them as ornaments on his matted locks, neck and waist. Further enraged, the rishis invoke a fierce tiger, which the Lord skins and dons as a shawl around his waist. Thoroughly frustrated, the rishis gather all their spiritual strength and invoke a powerful demon Muyalakan - a symbol of complete arrogance and ignorance. The Lord wearing a gentle smile, steps on the demon's back, immobilizes him and performs the *Ānanda Thaandava* (the dance of eternal bliss) and discloses his true form. The rishis surrender, realizing that this Lord is the truth and he is beyond magic and rituals.



The Ananda Thaandava

Adhishesha, the serpent who serves as a bed for the Lord in his manifestation as Vishnu, hears about the Ānanda thaandava and yearns to see and enjoy it. The Lord blesses him, beckons him to assume the saintly form of 'Patanjali' and sends him to the Thillai forest, informing him that he will display the dance in due course. Patanjali who meditated in the Himalayas during krita age joins another saint, Vyagrapathar / Pulikaalmuni (Vyagra / Puli meaning "Tiger" and patha / kaal meaning "feet" – referring to the story of how he sought and got the feet and eyesight of a tiger to help climb trees well before dawn to pick flowers for the Lord before the bees visit them). The story of sage Patanjali as well as his great student sage Upamanyu is narrated in both Vishnu Puranam as well as Siva Puranam. They move into the Thillai forest and worship Lord Shiva in the form of Shivalinga, a deity worshipped today as Thirumoolataneswarar (Thiru - sri, Moolatanam - primordial or in the nature of a foundation, Eswarar- the Lord). Legends say that Lord Shiva displayed his dance of bliss (the Aananda Thaandavam) - as Nataraja to these two saints on the day of the poosam star in the Tamil month of Thai (Jan – Feb).

The Ananda Tandava Posture

The Ananda Tandava posture of Lord Shiva is one of the famous postures recognized around the world by many. This celestial dancing posture tells us how a Bharathanatium Dancer should dance.

The demon under Nataraja's feet signifies that ignorance is under his feet

The Fire in this hand (power of destruction) means destroyer of evil

The raised hand signifies that he is the savior of all life.

The Ring at the back signifies the cosmos.

The drum in his hand signifies the origin of Life.

These are the main things that the Natarajar murti and the celestial dance posture depict. A rare type of thandava posture is seemed in Melakadambur temple near by 32 km from here. In this Karakoil, Nataraja dancing on a bull and deva's rounds the structure it's an pala art being kept in this shrine

Significance

Chidambaram is also referred to in various works such as Thillai (after the Thillai forest of yore in which the temple is now located), Perumpatrapuliyur or Vyagrapuram (in honour of Saint Vyagrapathar). The temple is supposed to be located at the Lotus heart of the Universe: Virat hridaya padma sthalam. On the spot where the Lord displayed his dance of bliss, the Ānanda Thaandavam - a spot exactly south of the "Thirumoolataaneswar temple", today is the Ponnambalam/ Porsabai (Pon meaning gold, Ambalam/Sabai meaning stage) housing the Lord Shiva in his dancing form. The Lord is also hence referred to as the Sabhanayakar, meaning the Lord of the Stage.

This gold-roofed stage is the sanctum sanctorum of the Chidambaram temple and houses the Lord in three forms:

the "form" - the anthropomorphological form as an appearance of Lord Nataraja, called the Sakala thirumeni.

the "semi-form" – the semi-anthropomorphological form as the Crystal linga of Chandramouleswarar, the Sakala nishkala thirumeni.

the "formless" – as the Space in Chidambara Rahasyam, an empty space within the sanctum sanctorum, the Nishkala thirumeni.

Pancha Bootha Sthalas

Chidambaram is one of the Panchabootha Sthalas, where the Lord is worshipped in his manifestation as sky or Aagayam ("pancha" – meaning five, bootha – meaning the elements: earth, water, fire, wind and space and "sthala" meaning location).

The others are:

- the Ekambareswarar temple at Kanchipuram, where the Lord is worshipped in his manifestation as Earth
- the Jambukeswarar temple at Thiruvanaikaval, in Tiruchirapalli, where the Lord is worshipped in his manifestation as Water
- the Annamalaiyar Temple at Tiruvannamalai, where the Lord is worshipped in his manifestation as Fire
- the Kalahasti temple at Srikalahasti, where the Lord is worshipped in his manifestation as air/wind.

Chidambaram also is one of the five places where Lord Shiva is said to have displayed his dance and all these places have stages/ sabhais . Apart from Chidambaram which has the Por sabhai, the others are the Rathina sabhai at Thiruvaalanganadu (rathinam – ruby / red) , the Chitra sabhai at Courtallam (chitra – painting), the Rajatha sabhai or the Velli ambalam at Madurai Meenakshi Amman Temple (rajatha / velli – silver) and the Thaamira sabhai at Nellaippar Temple, Tirunelveli (thaamiram – copper).

DEEKSHITHAR

The temple is managed and administered hereditarily by the Chidambaram Dikshitar – a class of Vaideeka Brahmins whom, legends say, were brought here, from Mt. Kailas, by Saint Patanjali, specifically for the performance of the daily rituals and maintenance of the Chidambaram temple.

. These Deekshithars follow the Vedic rituals, unlike the Sivachariyars or Adhisaivars – who follow the agamic rituals for the worship of Lord Shiva. The rituals for the temple were collated from the Vedas and set by Patanjali, who is said to have inducted the Deekshithars into the worship of Lord Shiva as Nataraja.

In ancient times the Deekshithars, the community of hereditary priests were known as Muvaryavar, or the 3000 of Tillai. The Chidambaram Mahatmyam recounts of their arrival in Tillai just as Lord Nataraja started his dance there. Thus they were the chosen guardians of the Lord's worship and of the temple from its very conception.

Their relation to Lord Nataraja is a very intimate and powerful one, which is expressed by the legend that once the 3000 were requested by Brahma to perform a Vedic sacrifice in heaven. At their return they counted to make sure all had returned safely. But however they counted, they found only 2999. All were very upset, until a voice from the Sabha called out and announced that He Himself, Lord Nataraja, was the 3000th Deekshithar. Today they number around 360.

Although considered as among the Shiva Brahmins or Ayars, they form a completely separate group. Not only is their philosophy and temple doctrine different from other social groups and other temples, but also their way of life is very different from the society around them.

In general, every married male member of the Deekshithar family gets a turn to perform the rituals at the temple and can serve as the chief priest for the day. Married Deekshithars are also entitled a share of the temple's revenue.

A Deekshithar has to wear his hair long, with a tonsure all around the rim. The hair is pulled to the left side and tied into a bun. This reflects their awareness of cosmology. It also expresses some aspects of the temple philosophy. They follow the teaching of Baudhayana Maharishi. Male and female energies are inseparable and both essential for the process of cosmos. The Deekshithars acknowledge their female side by wearing their hair long and in a bun, on the left side of the body, which is considered the female side.

The Chidambaram temple is unique in countless ways, but one outstanding feature is without doubt the way in which its priestly community is organized. It is possible the oldest and longest functioning democracy in the world. The community is called Podu Deekshithars, which means 'the gathering of Deekshithars'. Every Deekshithar has one vote in the general assembly, which takes place every twenty days. The daily management is in the hand of a team of nine members, one of which will be selected to be the Secretary of the temple for one year. The duties of the Secretary of the temple are to preside over all the activities in connection with the daily management, as well as to represent the temple

towards the outside world. All ritual duties in the temple are performed through a strict rotation system. Special honorary functions, like presiding over the great Chariot Festivals, or other special ritual functions are accredited by drawing a name from the list of community's members.

CHIDAMBARA RAHASYAM

Chidambara Ragasiyam/Rahasyam (Tamil for "secret of Chidambaram") is a Hindu belief that there is a secret message conveyed through the embossed figure near the shrine of Shiva in Chidambaram temple.

Since ancient times, it is believed that this is the place where Lord Shiva and Parvathi are present, but are invisible to the naked eyes of normal people. In the Chidambaram temple of Lord Nataraja, Chidambara Ragasiyam is hidden by a curtain (Maya). Darshan of Chidambara Ragasiyam is possible only when priests open the curtain (or Maya) for special poojas. People who are privileged to have a darshan of Chidambara Ragasiyam can merely see golden vilva leaves (Aegle Marmelos) signifying the presence of Lord Shiva and Parvathi in front of them. It is also believed that devout saints can see the Gods in their physical form, but no such cases have been officially reported.

The phrase "Chidambara Ragasiyam" really means something different. The phrase literally means a secret associated to Chidambaram - the place. Behind this is a real meaning to a secret. As described above there is a particular curtain kind of curtain which when removed enables us viewing the secret. The real significance of doing so is that, when the curtain which is "maya" is removed one can see his real self. And the seeing of oneself removing the curtain of maya is viewing the secret. According to legend, "Chidambara Ragasiyam" will never be revealed as it is the secret relating to a particular person who sees it removing the screen of "maya". In the temple, when the poojas are performed and the screen is removed, one will be able to see the secret only when he applies this to his mind and soul.

ARCHITECTURE

The Gopurams

The temple has 9 gateways and four of these have towering pagodas or gopurams each with 7 levels in the East, South, West and North. The eastern pagoda has all the 108 postures (karnams) of the Indian dance form – Bharathanatyam sculpted on it.

The Five Sabhais

There are 5 sabhas or diases or halls:

- the Chit sabhai, which is the sanctum sanctorum housing Lord Nataraja, his consort Goddess Shivagamasundari
- the Kanaka sabhai – in front of the Chitsabhai, from which the daily rituals are conducted

- the Nrithya sabhai or Natya sabhai, to the south of the temple's flag mast (or kodi maram or dwaja sthambam) where the Lord is said to have danced with Goddess Kali – an embodiment energy and established His supremacy
- the Raja sabhai or the 1000-pillared hall which symbolizes the yogic chakra of thousand pillared lotus or Sahasraram (which in yoga is a 'chakra' at the crown of the head and is a seat where the soul unites with God. This chakra is represented as a 1000-petalled lotus. Meditating by concentrating at the Sahasrara Chakra is said to lead to a state of union with the Divine force and is the pinnacle of yogic practice)
- the Deva sabhai, which houses the Pancha moorthis (pancha - five, moorthis - deities, namely the deities of Lord Ganesh - the remover of hurdles, Lord Somaskanda, a form where the Lord is in a seated posture with his grace and consort, the Lord's consort Sivananda nayaki, the Lord Muruga and the deity of Chandikeswarar - the principal and chief of the devotees of the Lord).

Other shrines

Apart from the five sabhais are:

- the shrines for the original Shivalingam worshipped by Saints Patanjali and Vyagrapathar – called the Thirumoolattaneswarar and his consort Umaiyammai (உமையம்மை) or Umaiya parvathi
- the shrines for the 63 prime devotees of Lord Siva – or the Arubathu moovar
- the shrines for Sivagami – an embodiment of knowledge or Gyanasakthi
- for Lord Ganesha – in his manifestation of one who removes hurdles
- for Lord Muruga or Pandiya nayakan – in his manifestation of one who holds the three forms of energy – Itchai or "desire" represented by his consort Valli, Kriya or "action" represented by his consort Deivayanai and Gnana or "Knowledge" represented by the spear He carries to destroy ignorance.

There are also several smaller shrines in the temple complex.

Water bodies in and around the temple

Moorthi (Idol), Sthalam (Place) and Theertham (Waterbodies) signify the holiness of a temple. The Chidambaram temple is well endowed with several water bodies within and around it.

The temple complex on 40 acres (160,000 m²) houses the temple tank – called the Sivaganga (சிவகங்கை). This large tank is in the third corridor of the temple opposite to the shrine for Goddess Sivagami.

- The Paramanandha koobham is the well on the eastern side of the Chitsabhai from which water is drawn for performing pooja in the temple.
- The Kuyya theertham is situated to the north-east of Chidambaram near Killai near the Bay of Bengal and has the shore called Pasamaruthanthurai.
- The Pulimadu is situated around a kilometer and a half to the south of Chidambaram.

- The Vyagrapatha theertham is situated on to the west of the Chidambaram temple opposite the temple of Lord Ilamai akkinaar.
- The Anantha theertham is to the west of Chidambaram temple in front of the Ananteswarar temple.
- The Nagaseri is the tank to the west of the Anantha theertham.
- The Brahma theertham is to the north-west of the Chidambaram temple at Thirukalaanjeri.
- The Siva piriya is a tank to the north of the Chidambaram temple and opposite the Brahma chamundeswari temple (aka the Thillai Kali temple).
- Thiruparkadal is the tank to the south-east of the Siva piriya.

Govindaraja Shrine



The Chidambaram temple complex houses a shrine for the Lord Govindaraja Perumal and his consort Pundareegavalli Thaayar. This shrine is claimed to be the Thillai Thiruchitrakootam and is one of the 108 divyadesas – or the key shrines of Vishnu, which have been sanctified (mangala saasanam) by hymns (the Naalayira divya prabantham) sung by the chief devotees of Lord Vishnu (called the Aalwars) . Tillai Chitrakootam (but not the Givindaraja Temple in its current form) has been sung by Kulasekara Alwar and Tirumangai Mannan Alwar. Both Alwars have recorded that the Chidambaram Brahmins(Dikshitaras)were ones who were doing vedic and proper (in Tamil" muraiyaha")poojas for the Lord in Chitrakootam. There are controversies however, since many feel that the chitrakootam originally referenced to by alwars could have been the one at UP where Rama spent time in ashrams of sages like viswamitra and atri. This is because the currently available versions of works of alwars were copied and re-written centuries after the time of alwars sometime during late medieval ages. Many hymns written by alwars are missing and many have changes incorporated in them. This apart some sources hold the founding of thillai chitrakootam to 1400 or probably 1600.C.E only.

Significance of the temple design

The layout and architecture of the temple is replete with philosophical meanings.

- The 9 gateways signify the 9 orifices in the human body.

- The Chitsabai or Ponnambalam, the sanctum sanctorum represents the heart which is reached by a flight of 5 stairs called the Panchaatchara padi - pancha meaning 5, achhara – indestructible syllables – "SI VA YA NA MA", from a raised anterior dias - the Kanakasabai. The access to the Sabhai is through the sides of the stage (and not from the front as in most temples).
- The Ponnambalam or the Sanctum sanctorum is held by 28 pillars – representing the 28 agamas or set methodologies for the worship of Lord Shiva. The roof is held by a set of 64 beams representing the 64 forms of art and is held by several cross-beams representing the innumerable blood vessels. The roof has been laid by 21600 golden tiles with the word SIVAYANAMA inscribed on them representing 21600 breaths. The golden tiles are fixed using 72000 golden nails which represents the no. of nadis exists in human body. The roof is topped by a set of 9 sacred pots or kalasas, representing the 9 forms of energy. (refer Umapathy Sivam's Kunchitaangrithavam)

Temple car

The Chidambaram temple car is, perhaps, the most beautiful example of a temple car in all of Tamil Nadu. This car, on which Lord Nataraja descends twice a year, is drawn by several thousand devotees during the festivals.

RITUALS

The temple is managed and administered hereditarily by the Chidambaram Dikshitar – a class of Vaideeka Brahmins whom, legends say, were brought here, from Mt. Kailas, by Saint Patanjali, specifically for the performance of the daily rituals and maintenance of the Chidambaram temple.

The Deekshithars were supposed to be 3000 (2999 actually, with the Lord totaling 3000) and were called the Tillai Moovayaram. Today they number around 360. These Deekshithars follow the Vedic rituals, unlike the Sivachariyars or Adhisaivars – who follow the agamic rituals for the worship of Lord Shiva. The rituals for the temple were collated from the Vedas and set by Patanjali, who is said to have inducted the Deekshithars into the worship of Lord Shiva as Nataraja.

In general, every married male member of the Deekshithar family gets a turn to perform the rituals at the temple and can serve as the chief priest for the day. Married Deekshithars are also entitled a share of the temple's revenue.

The day begins with the Chief priest of the day, performing required rituals to purify himself and assume the Shivoham bhava, after which he enters the temple to do the, daily rituals. The day begins with the Lord's footwear (padukas) being brought at 7:00am from the Palliyarai (or bedroom) to the sanctum sanctorum in a palanquin accompanied by devotees with cymbals and chimes and drums. The Priest then begins by performing the daily rituals with a yagna and a ' Go pujai' (worship of a cow and her calf).

Worship (Pooja) is done 6 times in a day. Before each pooja, the Spadika linga (Crystal linga) – the 'aru uruva' or the semi form state of Lord Shiva is anointed with ghee, milk, curds, rice, sandal paste and holy ash. This is followed by presenting the neivedhyam or

offering of freshly prepared food and sweets to the Lord and the deeparaadhana, a ritual of showing varied and decoratively set lamps, the reciting of Vedas in Sanskrit and the Panchapuranam (a set of 5 poems from a set of 12 works in Tamil – called the panniru thirumurai). The pooja ends with the priest parting the curtains of the sanctum sanctorum to reveal the Chidambara Rahasyam.

Before the 2nd pooja, apart from the regular anointing of the crystal linga, a ruby Nataraja deity (the Rathinasabhapathy) is also anointed. The 3rd pooja is at around 12.00 noon, after which the temple closes until around 4:30pm. The 4th pooja is performed at 6.00 PM, the 5th at 8:00pm and the last pooja of the day is performed at 10:00pm, after which the Lord's footwear is taken in a procession for Him to 'retire' for the night. Before the 5th pooja at night, the priest performs special rituals at the Chidambara Rahasya, where he anointed the yantra with aromatic substances and offers 'neivedhyam'.

The last pooja, called the Arthajama pooja in Chidambaram is done with special fervor. It is believed that the entire divine force of the universe retires into the Lord, when he retires for the night.

FESTIVALS

A whole year for men is said to be a single day for the Gods. Just as six poojas are performed in a day at the sanctum sanctorum, six anointing ceremonies are performed for the principal deity - Lord Nataraja in a year. They are the Marghazhi Thiruvaadhirai (in December - January) indicating the first pooja , the fourteenth day after the new moon (chaturdasi) of the month of Masi (February - March) indicating the second pooja, the Chittirai Thiruvonam (in April- May), indicating the third pooja or uchi kaalam , the Uthiram of Aani (June- July) also called the Aani Thirumanjanam indicating the evening or the fourth pooja , the chaturdasi of Aavani (August-September) indicating the fifth pooja and the chaturdasi of the month of Puratasi (October - November) indicating the sixth pooja or Arthajama.

Of these the Marghazhi Thiruvaadhirai (in December-January) and the Aani Thirumanjanam (in June-July) are the most important. These are conducted as the key festivals with the main deity being brought outside the sanctum sanctorum in a procession that included a temple car procession followed by a long anointing ceremony. Several hundreds of thousands of people flock the temple to see the anointing ceremony and the ritualistic dance of the Lord when He is taken back to the sanctum sanctorum. There are references in Umapathy Sivam's 'Kunchithaangrithavam' that the Maasi festival also had the Lord being carried out in procession, however this is not in vogue these days.

MAHAA KUMBHAABHISHEKAM

TO SRI SIVAKAAMA SUNDHARI SAMETHA SRI NATARAJARAJA MOORTHY - on 01.05.2015 FRIDAY between 7.00.a.m. and 8.30.a.m.

Kumbhabhisheka yaaga poojas start from 25.04.2015

02.05.2015 saturday MahaaRathotsavam for Mahaakumbhabhishekam

03.05.2015 sunday Dharsan Festival for Mahaakumbhabhishekam

THE SIX MAHAABHISHEKAS OF SRI NATARAJARAJA

03.05.2021 Monday 6.00 p.m. CHITHIRAI ONAM @ Kanaka Sabhai
 15.07.2021 Thursday 3.30 a.m. AANITHIRUMANJANAM @ RAJA SABHAI
 21.08.2021 Saturday 6.00 p.m. AAVANI CHATHURDHASI @ Kanaka Sabhai
 19.09.2021 Sunday 6.00 p.m. PURATTASI CHATHURDHASI @ Kanaka Sabhai
 20.12.2021 Monday 3.30 a.m. AARDHRAA ABHISHEKAM @ RAJA SABHAI
 15.02.2022 Tuesday 6.00 a.m. MAASI CHATHURDHASI @ Kanaka Sabhai

AANI THIRUMANJANA FESTIVAL SCHEDULE

06.07.2021 Tuesday DWAJAAROHANAM
 07.07.2021 Wednesday GOLDEN SOORYAPRABHA
 08.07.2021 Thursday SILVER CHANDRAPARABHA
 09.07.2021 Friday SILVER BHootha VAAHANAM
 10.07.2021 Saturday Silver Rishabhavaahanam (Theruvadaichaan)
 11.07.2021 Sunday SILVER GAJA VAAHANAM
 12.07.2021 Monday GOLDEN KAILAASA VAAHANAM
 13.07.2021 Tuesday BHIKSHADANAR ON GOLDEN CAR
 14.07.2021 Wednesday MAHAA RATHOTHSAVAM OF SRI NATARAJARAJAR
 15.07.2021 Thursday AANI THIRUMANJANA MAHAABHISHEKAM 3.30 a.m., AANI DHARSANAM @2.00 p.m.

AARUDHRAA DHARSANA FESTIVAL SCHEDULE

11.12.2021 Saturday DWAJAAROHANAM
 12.12.2021 Sunday GOLDEN SOORYAPRABHA
 13.12.2021 Monday SILVER CHANDRAPARABHA
 14.12.2021 Tuesday SILVER BHootha VAAHANAM
 15.12.2021 Wednesday SILVER RISHABHAVAHAHANAM(THERUVADAICHAAN)
 16.12.2021 Thursday SILVER GAJA VAAHANAM
 17.12.2021 Friday GOLDEN KAILAASA VAAHANAM
 18.12.2021 Saturday BHIKSHADANAR ON GOLDEN CAR
 19.12.2021 Sunday MAHAA RATHOTHSAVAM OF SRINATARAJARAJAR
 20.12.2021 Monday MAHAABHISHEKAM 3.30a.m., AARUDHRAA DHARSANAM @ 2.00 p.m.

OTHER FESTIVALS

04.06.2021 Monday 63 NAAYANMAAR UTHSAVAM
 19.10.2021 Tuesday SRI MOOLANAATHAR ANNAABHISHEKAM
 22.10.2021 Friday SRI SIVAKAMA SUNDHARI UTHSAVAARAMBAM
 30.10.2021 Saturday SRI SIVAKAMA SUNDHARI RATHOTHSAVAM
 31.10.2021 Sunday POORA CHALANGAI
 01.11.2021 Monday THIRUKALYANAM
 09.11.2021 Tuesday SOORA SAMHAARAM
 10.11.2021 Wednesday DEVASENA SUBRAHMANYAR KALYANAM
 18.01.2022 Tuesday "THAI-POOSAM" THEERTHAVARI
 01.03.2022 Tuesday MAHAA SIVA RAATHRI

Dharshan Time

Morning 6.00.a.m to 12.00 noon

Evening 5.00.p.m. to 10.00 night

Daily Pooja

Time: 6.30.a.m. PAAL NIVEDHYAM

[PADHUKA (Lord's footwear) being brought from palliyarai to sanctum sanctorum in a palanquin]

7.00.a.m. MAHA AARTHI

7.45 a.m.to 9.00.a.m. KALASANDHI POOJA (first pooja of the day)

[During the time kalasandhi homam, spatika linga abhishekam and maha aarthi]

10.00a.m.to 11.00.a.m. IRANDAAM KAALAM (2nd pooja of the day)

[During the time spatika linga abhishekam & Rathna sabhapathi-Rubi Natarajar abhishekam]

11.30.a.m.to 12.00noon UCHIKAALAM (3rd pooja of the day)

[During the time spatika linga abhishekam and aarthi and the Temple will be closed]

5.15p.m. to 6.00.p.m. SAAYARAKSHAI (4th pooja of the day)

[During the time spatika linga abhishekam and shotasopachaara aarthi]

7.00.p.m.to 8.00.p.m. IRANDAAM KAALAM (5th pooja of the day)

[During the time spatika linga abhishekam,chidambara rahasya pooja, maha aarthi]

9.00.p.m. to 10.00.p.m. ARDHAJAAMAM (6th and last pooja of the day)

[During the time spatika linga abhishekam, maha aarthi and then PADHUKA comes back to palliyarai in a palanquin, maha aarthi at palliyarai, chandeswarar aarthi, bhairavar aarthi, Ardhaajaama sundharar aarthi]

Archanaas

Ashtoththara sathanaama

Sahasranaama

Sammelana sahasranaama

Panchakshara Thrisathi

Pancha mukha sahasranaama

Ekasamaya Lakshaarchanaa

Abishekams

Chandhramouleeswara spatikalinga abishekam

Rathnasahapathy abishekam

SwarnaAakarshanaBhairava abishekam

Mahanyaasa poorvaka Rudhraabishekam

Mahaarudhrajapa yagna sahitha mahaarudhram

Athirudhrajapa yagna sahitha athirudhram

Other Kainkaryams

Annapaavaadai mahaaneivedhyam

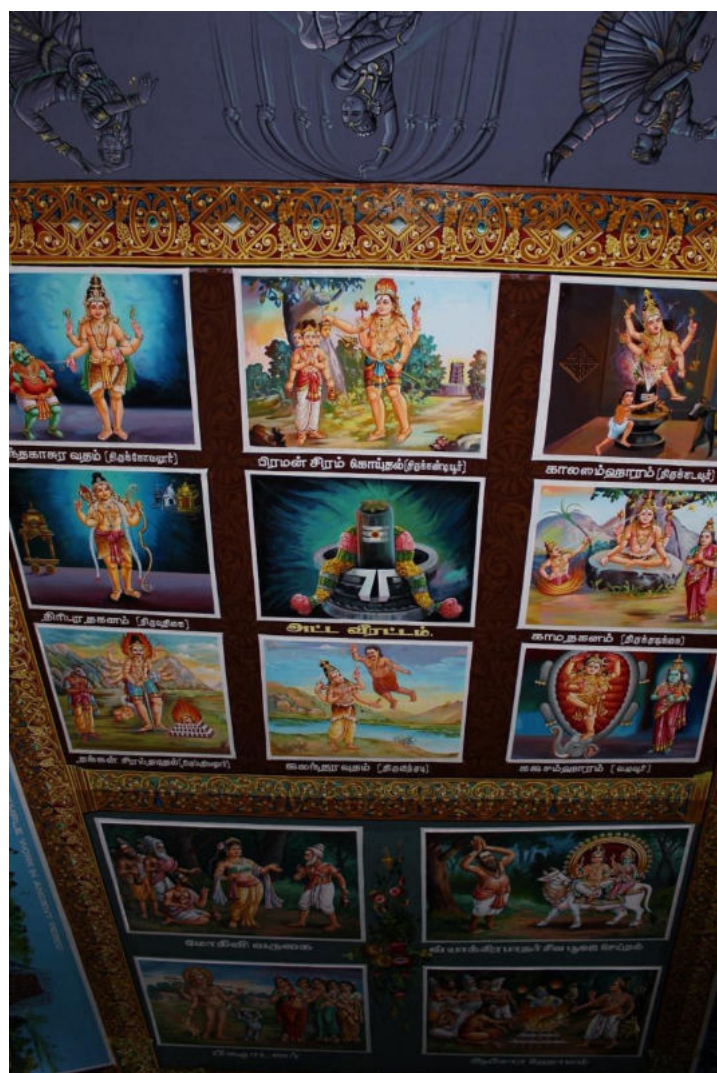
Mokshadheepam (for ancestors)

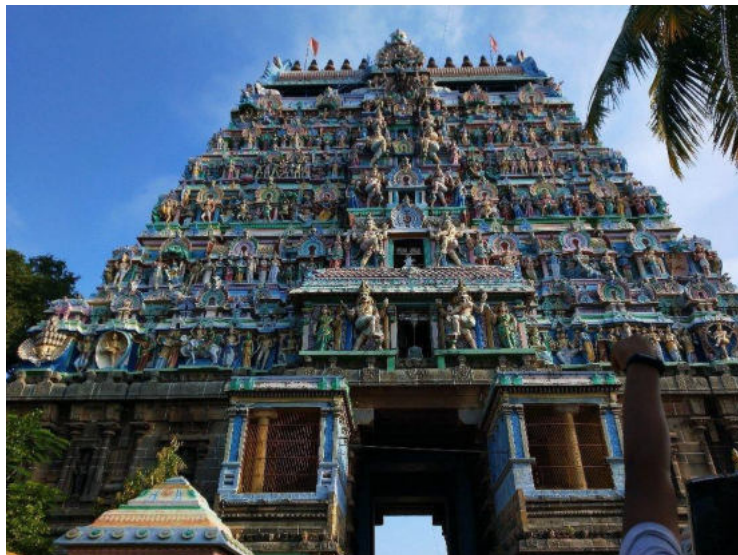
Sahasra Bhojanam

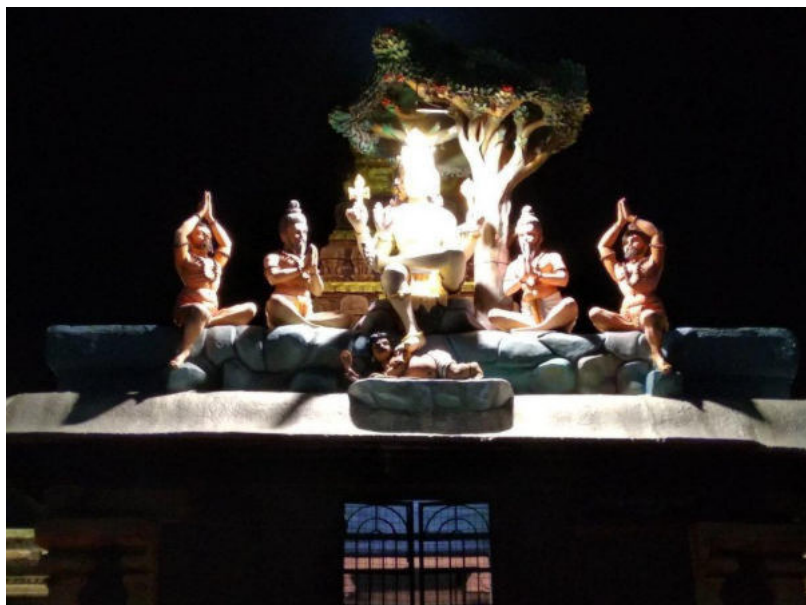
Ref: tripadvisor.in

Photos:

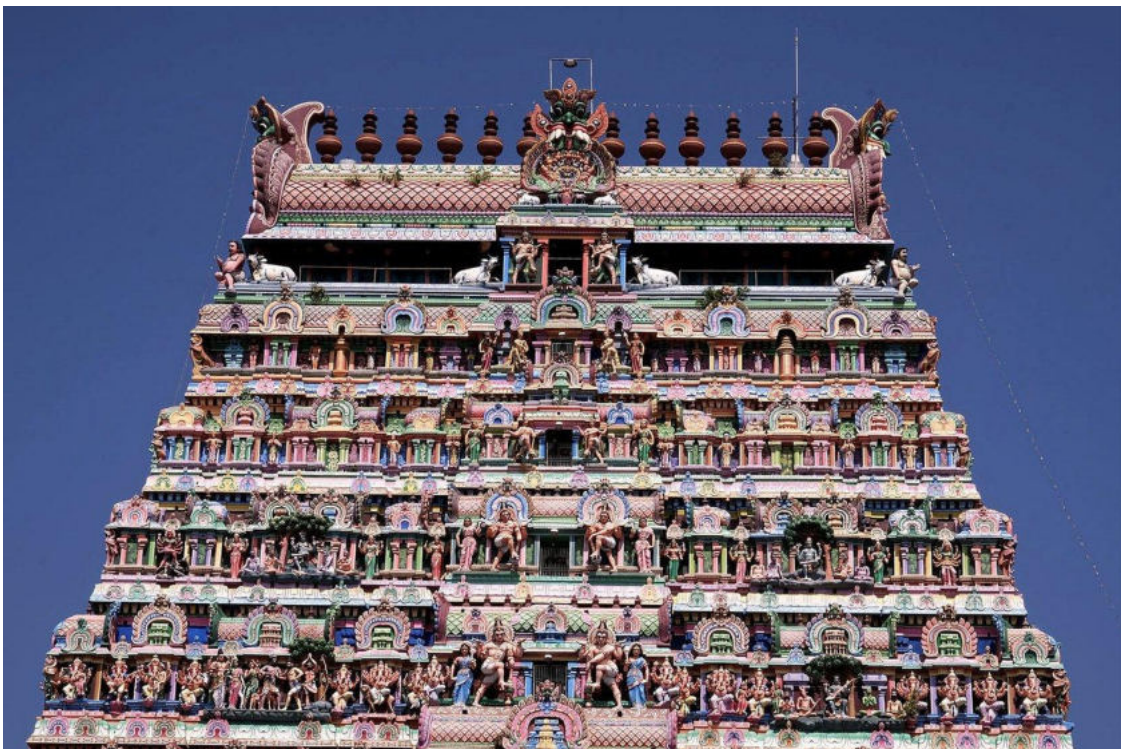






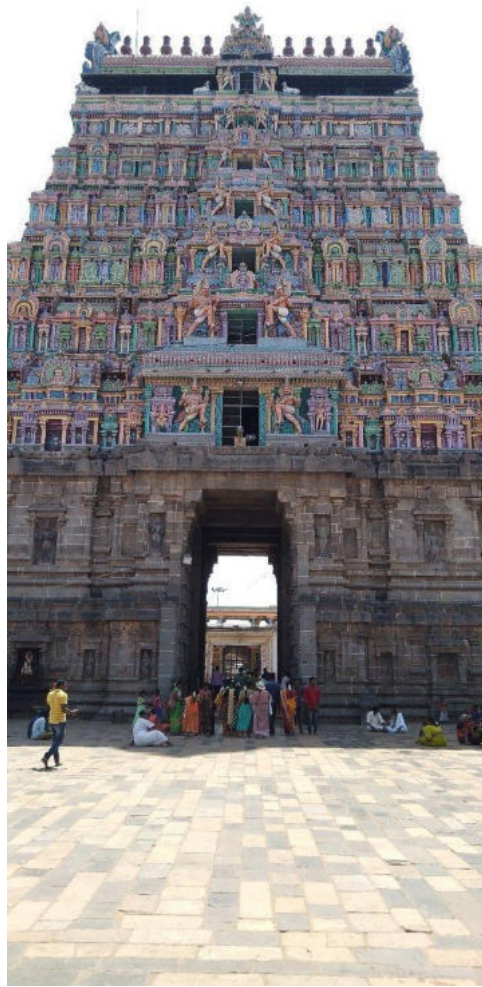


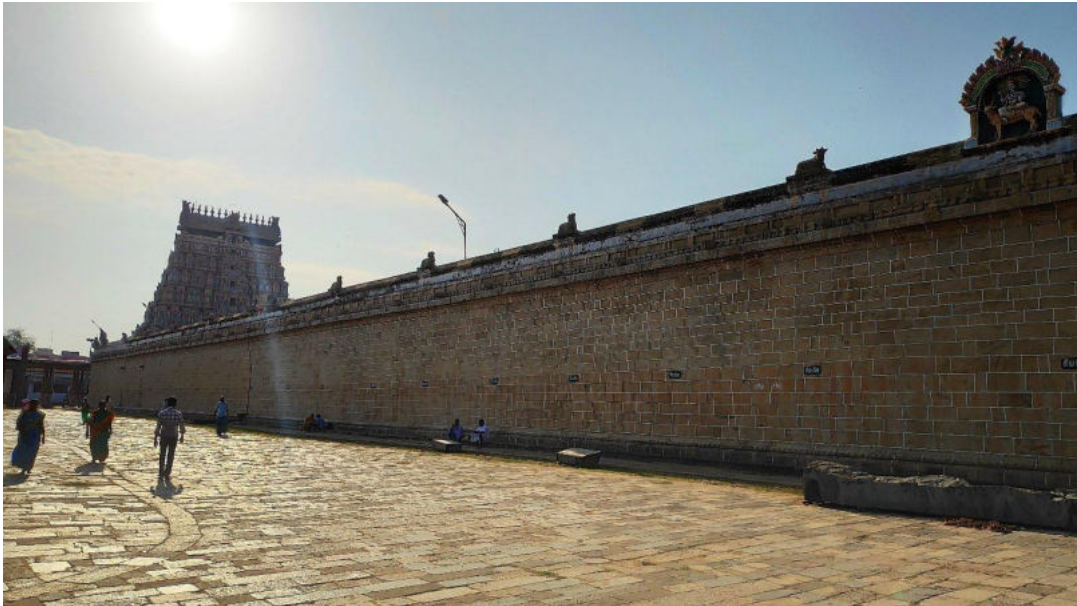














Videos:

Chidambaram temple: <https://youtu.be/fUb31Zq9IHg>

Nataraja temple, Chidambaram: https://youtu.be/3UKSA_xzQOo

Chidambaram Nataraja temple: https://youtu.be/3UKSA_xzQOo

Nataraja temple, Chidambaram: <https://youtu.be/il8N8SUjHzQ>

Thillai Nataraja Temple (in Tamil): <https://youtu.be/yPJGb1D2k7Y>

Chidambaram temple: https://youtu.be/_YgHzo0Y4M0

Chidambaram Nataraja temple: <https://youtu.be/1jLTijHWz4Q>

Secrets behind Nataraja temple: <https://youtu.be/OuCsZS0JxAE>

Nataraja temple history (Hindi): <https://youtu.be/uCibZc-GH-Q>

Thillai Nataraja Temple: <https://youtu.be/0VQ5747zsAk>

Sthala puranam: <https://youtu.be/G41HjRYwdkQ>

Chidambaram temple mystery: <https://youtu.be/shqy1xpGFik>

Chidambaram temple and Dikshitaras: <https://youtu.be/Dg0aVxKiRQ4>

Chidambaram Nataraja temple- info: <https://youtu.be/9HcMLAdYxto>

Thillai Nataraja Temple: <https://youtu.be/pC49vQ3nnaQ>

Chidambaram temple seva-Isha foundation: <https://youtu.be/KcNXUhRijp0>

Thillai Nataraja Temple: <https://youtu.be/jb9atepglvq>

Chidambaram temple pooja schedule etc: https://youtu.be/e_RNMLKKBKU

APPENDIX

Videos: Hanuman chalisa and Hanuman bhajans:

Hanuman chalisa: Pt. Jasraj and Shankar Mahadevan:

https://youtu.be/EfEy_PHxkPs

Hanuman Chalisa: M S Subbulakshmi: <https://youtu.be/r3DC3PjUTbc>

Hanuman Chalisa: Hariharan: <https://youtu.be/XQjcHAVbljM>

Hanuman bhajans-Hariharan: <https://youtu.be/UzdLbpQ-enM>

Hanuman chalisa and bhajans- Lata Mangeshkar:

<https://youtu.be/wyh6KbRV9FE>

Anjaneya dandakam : Raghava Ramanuja: <https://youtu.be/CROMR1NyZ3M>

Anjaneya Pancharatnam: <https://youtu.be/osjSaJysruw>

Hanumadashtakam:SPBalasubramanyam: <https://youtu.be/HBL9QHG-fKc>

Hanumadashtakam:P B Srinivas: https://youtu.be/HukdVz_IWr0

Anjaneya stuti: S P Balasubramanyam: <https://youtu.be/-WSHW3A9LG4>

Hanuman sahasranamam: <https://youtu.be/eatAl5kfBFg>

Anjaneya Ashtottara shata namavali: <https://youtu.be/7no226t6wpo>

Ashtottara shata stotram: Puttur Narsimha Nayak:

<https://youtu.be/fILgFUVDXp4>

Ramayana Jaya mantram: <https://youtu.be/Lg0iinZAtMw>

Ramayana Jaya mantram: <https://youtu.be/liLTfih-vKI>

Hanuman sahasranamam and stotras: https://youtu.be/zhlyHRM_g34

1. Link to Shiva tandava stotram, sung by Shankar Mahadevan:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S980-z1qx3g>

2. Link to Shiva tandava stotram with Sanskrit lyrics:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QvUF4LkmwKo>

3. Shiva panchakshari stotram:

Rajshri soul:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hFXRBS_w4bY

Uploaded by Bhakti:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fjmJAGTbsfc>

M. S. Subbulakshmi:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yyLeBNsovQ8>

4. Lingashtakam:

Watch "Lingashtakam I Sooryagayathri I By The Holy Ganga In Rishikesh I Shiva Chant" on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KevXUCjcmEk>

5. Shivashtakam:

Watch "Shivashtakam [Full Song] By S.P. Balasubrahmaniam - Shiva Roopa Darshan" on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nV0OzSNe578>

6. Kashi Vishwanatha ashtakam:

Watch "Vishwanathashtakam | SP Balasubrahmanyam | Shiva Stotra | Full song" on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OrpwYGYECQE>

7. Nirvana shatkam:

Watch "Shivoham - Nirvana Shatkam - Sri Jagadguru Adi Shankaracharya - by Sri Balasubramanyam" on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5pLjr8Zp5gs>

8. Dakshinamurthy stotram:

Watch "MS Subbulakshmi-Dakshinamurthy-stotram" on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=85WLkkxd1TU>

9. Rudram:

Watch "Sri Rudram" on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vQjBQJqi0Ak>

10. Link to Mrita Sanjivani kavcham:

<https://app.box.com/s/otxk14z00nb39w36ikkgn7z1o06vd0wt>

11. Link to Ganagapur Dattatreya nijapada darshana.mp4:

<https://app.box.com/s/svw4tuq7m6bd0e9v1eja7vnq4nbd8hfw>

Good sites:

A very good site for stotras, ashtottara etc on various Gods (you can choose the language too):

<https://vignanam.org>

To bring together and disseminate the Vedic and ethnic features allied with Kerala:

<http://vaikhari.org/>

Another very good site one can refer for Vedas, samhitas, aranyakas, upanishads etc etc:

www.vedicheritage.gov.in

Vedic Mantra collection .. Mantra sangrah:

<https://www.drikpanchang.com/vedic-mantra/mantra-collection.html>

Link to Sanskrit mantras, prayers etc:

<https://www.hinduwebsite.com/mantraslinks.asp>

Mantras, shlokas, stotras for Hindu Gods, Goddesses:

<https://www.templepurohit.com/mantras-slokas-stotras/>

For Stotras:

<https://stotranidhi.com>

Box link to download ebook..Daily prayers.pdf (in Sanskrit+English):

<https://app.box.com/s/0gz5k856mzne79jc255ycngjg9ye7ttb>

Box link to download ebook..Devata stotras.pdf (in Kannada):

<https://app.box.com/s/7rh6het5atjnd18bg33cjs1vbjwdh6y4>

Link to download Lalitha Sahasranamam:

<https://vignanam.org/sanskritam/sree-lalita-sahasra-nama-stotram.html>

Link to download Durga saptashati:

<https://vignanam.org/sanskritam.htm#&panel1-1>

Box link to download ebook..Devata stotras.pdf (in Kannada):

<https://app.box.com/s/7rh6het5atjnd18bg33cjs1vbjwdh6y4>

Box link to download ebook..Rama katha rasavahini –part-1 by Sri Sathya Sai Baba:

<https://app.box.com/s/789eqte8p9o0c1zm50mdxcn44i1q7cb2>

Box link to download ebook..Rama katha rasavahini –part-2 by Sri Sathya Sai Baba:

<https://app.box.com/s/yvuv38j9pcbvzzc23zpy9xht49bdjxzv>

Box Link to download ebook ShreeRam.pdf ...Ramayana in pictures

<https://app.box.com/s/o7kgml3ig6ko5wea5h245qawion0j9y7>

Box Link to download ebook RamNavami messages (Kannada).pptx

<https://app.box.com/s/3d7can9x1jfrch7cdforha6qfgljy5g>

Download Ramcharita manas (Tulasidas) by Gita Press:

<https://archive.org/details/GitaPress790>

Download Valmiki Ramayanam (English) from TTD, Thirupathy:

<https://ebooks.tirumala.org/read?id=20&title=Valmiki%20Ramayanam>

When Lord Ram and Hanuman gave darshan to Tulasidas: Talk by Sri Sathya Sai Baba:

<https://www.facebook.com/SathyaSaiWithStudents/videos/812029159749759/?app=fbl>

Link to download Avadhut Geeta: (English):

<https://www.holybooks.com/wp-content/uploads/Song-of-the-Avadhut-by-Dattatreya.pdf>